The Globalisation of Professional Road Cycling
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I. Introduction, hypothesis

Road cycling is a sport closely tied to Western Europe and its traditions, however the patterns shown in the last 20 to 30 years are pinpointing a different future for it. One of the most conservative sports on the planet is on its way to become a professional globalized business. In fact, it already shows similarities to its more popular and business-like competitors (e.g. soccer). International political relations and market economy transformed road cycling to what it is now through globalization, nevertheless that process is at a very early stage.

This thesis focuses solely on road cycling, mentioning track cycling and mountainbike only when necessary and relevant to the main topic. This goes for competitive amateur road cycling too. Nevertheless, it is important to note that it is hard to precisely define professional level as such. In my research I considered professional the teams registered at the international federation (UCI) (from Continental to WorldTour) and official events from “.2” to ”.WT”. Different team and race levels and their relations to each other are discussed in Chapter V. Though it is an emerging topic, this thesis only mentions the issue and current position of professional women’s cycling as there is no sufficient information available and no perspective as it is a fresh development. In this thesis, I hypothesised that the major events and trends of international relations can directly influence the processes and implicate changes of paradigm in professional road cycling. Moreover, I suggested that these changes occur with a certain delay after a major event of international relations. It is a question, whether this delay is becoming ever shorter due to globalisation and growing interconnectedness. Moreover, in the part discussing the economics of professional road cycling I tried to find out whether the current business model of the sport is sustainable. The basic idea is that the business of cycling should rely on the traditional return-for-investment model of the market so as to become sustainable. That is currently not the case because of state actors and wealthy hobby cyclists. In order to draw the conclusions, I examined the processes of professional road cycling in the field of international relations using a multidisciplinary approach. Starting with diplomacy, then scrutinising world economy and international institutional structures I carefully looked at the reciprocities between the evolvements of these fields and the processes seen in the sport. Throughout my research I mostly analysed secondary resources in the aforementioned disciplines. Nevertheless, I also had to analyse primary resources such as globalisation statistics when scrutinising lesser researched areas. The connections are
obvious, however it remains to be seen how deep effect could sole decisions by world leaders have on this sport. These might defy the meritocratic principles and independence emphasized by the Olympic movement and the Union Cyclisté International (UCI). My other goal is to get a better understanding of the future of professional road cycling by reflecting on the past events. The major events and trends of world politics and economy determine the directions in which the sport is developing. Considering that there is a delay between any actual happening in the field of international relations, world politics and economy – all of which are necessarily interconnected – changes in the world of professional road cycling can be forecasted. This way it is possible for major stakeholders, race organizers, professional teams and riders’ associations to begin the adaptation processes well in advance of any forecasted change. Though examples of such quick reactions exist (I will give examples in Chapter 5 discussing the economics), they are not common in the world of cycling given the relatively small number of economic and political experts compared to those specialized in training, nutrition, engineering, logistics etc.

The low number of experts is prevalent when researching institutional, economic and political related articles or books of road cycling. There are countless scientific articles and books written about training, nutrition, physiology and physics of this sport. There are a few ones putting the economics of cycling under scrutiny, however the supply is somewhat lacking. If we consider international relations, world politics and sport diplomacy, only a handful of books and studies are specialized on those fields. Very little could be found about the institutional structure of the sport, other than what is present on the webpage of the UCI. On one hand this is a huge opportunity to work on a scarcely researched field and to come up with brand new results and discoveries. On the other hand, it is an enormous challenge to work with very little available information, using primary sources and articles written for the greater public, rather than a small community of experts. For that reason, a large amount of research has to be focused on comparing the existing resources on the history of the sport and the history of international relations and economics.

The structure of this work reflects the multidisciplinary approach which is inevitable when researching the colourful field of sport diplomacy and international relations. After the introduction, in Chapter II. I examine the history and traditions of road cycling as those still have a large influence on the current practices and motions of the sport. The
strengths and weaknesses of today’s business model are coming from the early 20th century when the frameworks of cycling have been made. Chapter III. goes through the process of road cycling becoming a globalized business. It explains the global professional road cycling existing now, by introducing the sport’s history in certain regions and compare it to the given region’s role in a geopolitical game and its position relative to Western Europe as the birthplace of cycling. This chapter was the core of my research as it outlines the relations between political, economic processes and sports development. Chapter IV. discusses the economics of professional road cycling, while Chapter V. tries to forecast the way it might develop.

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II. History, Tradition and the impacts of major historical events

In order to understand the present of the sport, the past cannot be ignored. Moreover, most of the attributes and challenges of today’s professional cycling can only be understood when scrutinising its history.

Road cycling started from the late 19th and early 20th century’s Western Europe. It is a very conservative sport that still preserves its traditions and what is proud of its history. The relations between the major stakeholders of the sport and the conduct of business is still based on those couple of decades when the foundations of road cycling were laid down. Karl Drais’ invention in 1816 is widely considered the first bicycle and it is suggested that the first road race was held in France in 1868. (Van Hoorebeke, [2011].) However, the modern sport was only born after the invention of the chain drive, the diamond frame (1885) and the pneumatic tyres (1890). As bicycles became safe and easy to ride and real incomes in Western Europe grew significantly, bike sales soared.

II.1. Early professionalization
Newspapers organized the first races on public roads to show that large distances could be covered by bicycles. These one-day races were held annually and usually connected larger cities such as Paris-Roubaix and Milan-San Remo. Most of these races were organized in Belgium, France and Italy, but the sport quickly became popular in Spain and the Netherlands as well. These are the 5 core countries of road cycling and they are in the heart of the sport to this very day. Just as in European politics the British are slightly outsiders in road cycling. Interestingly the National Cycling Union of the United Kingdom banned bike racing on public roads and that ban was in place until the late 1950s. At the same time French magazines created the myth of the cycling hero and boosted newspaper and bike sales. As bike manufacturers wanted the best cyclists to ride their products, cyclists’ salaries grew ever higher. This and the introduction of specific cycling magazines led to the professionalization of the sport, which came early compared to others. Still professionals in teams, free-lancer pros and amateurs were racing against each other in major events like the Grand Tours. (van Hoorebeke, [2011].) Moreover, the races made their locations legendary. Cycling became very close to the regions and the people living there, it made its way into the local culture. Flanders, Lombardy or the former Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of France are still very popular among cycling fans. To this very day the same events are in the centre of the sport, thus the race organizers are the most powerful actors and Western Europe remained the heartland of road cycling.
II.2. World War I.
The 12th edition of the Tour de France started from Paris on the 28th June, the same day Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, leading to the First World War. The outburst of the war meant that the biggest events of cycling were not held again until 1919. However as some of the one-day races were going on despite the situation. (van Hoorebeke [2011])

As road cycling tried to recover after the shock of the war it faced 2 major problems. The core countries isolated Germany and the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, thus road cycling could not expand. The sport evolved in Germany and Eastern Europe with an emphasis on motor-paced track races, however these were not favoured by the UCI, which at the time had its headquarters in Paris. (Németh, [2012]) The other major problem was the economic recession after the war. Even if bicycle manufacturers survived the war they were unwilling to sponsor cycling teams. Without fixed salaries riders once again became amateurs, very few could make a living out of prize money.

II.3. Great Depression following the 1929 stock market crash
Following the Great Depression the situation turned even worse. Team managers started to make agreements to keep the riders’ incomes low. That way the few bicycle manufacturers staying in the business formed a cartel. Fortunately for the sportsmen technological advancement came to their help as radio broadcasts of the races became regular and short television appearances also started. The sport’s popularity grew quickly once again and companies not related to cycling were also willing to invest in teams. Companies like Martini saw the opportunity in road cycling to build their brands. (Van Hoorebeke [2011].) Riders’ incomes soared again, they were relying on their fixed payments more than prize money. For this reason, the cooperation among teammates strengthened, making for a more tactical racing style. Consequently, the freelancer professional phenomena came to an end as it became impossible to win races without sufficient help from teammates.

II.4. World War II.
Despite the positive developments, processes started that would lead the continent to another war. Tensions in Europe increased once again in the 1930s as the losers of the “Great War” tried to regain lost territories and positions in politics as well. The Great Depression also gave way political extremes. As the nationalist voices grew stronger and
France was determined to keep its empire of colonies, Tour de France was only contested by national and regional teams from as early as 1930. However, that did not mean that they invited teams from a variety of countries. The very opposite happened. France had a national team and numerous regional teams, including Moroccan riders as a French colony at the time. Francophone countries also had multiple teams. Notably there was an economic reason behind the invitation of national teams. Cartels between teams still existed and there were allegations of sports fraud. (Augendre [1996].) Fortunately though, other major race organizers did not follow L’Auto magazine and apart from minor races and 4 editions of the Vuelta a Espana road races were still contested by trade teams. The reason behind that is simple. Belgian and Dutch colonies were not in the position of sending riders to the very technical one-day races organized there, while Italy did not have any colonies. On the other hand, organizers still favoured their fellow countrymen over sporting or economic reasons. 80-90% of the bunch riding at the Giro d’Italia were Italians, mostly from Italian teams. For this reason, World War II. did not bring professional road cycling to a complete stop. Tour of Italy and Spain would still go on until 1941 and 1942 with most of the riders being locals. Francophone countries annexed by Hitler were heavily affected though. The races held there were rather multinational. The example of the Tour de France is a perfect case study for the fate of the sport, the riders and the other actors of the cycling world during and after the war. In 1939 just before the war, Germany Italy and Spain did not allow their national teams in the Tour de France. Even the 1938 winner, the Italian Gino Bartali had to stay away from the race. After running the 1939 Tour de France with only 79 riders Henri Desgrange planned the 1940 race too. The route had to be approved by military authorities and it would have taken the peloton along the Maginot-line for safety reasons. Part of the riders would have been drawn from military units of the allied. (The Bicycle [1943].) Despite the careful planning the race was not held as the magazine L’Auto refused to cooperate with authorities after the German invasion. German propaganda needed the Tour, so they cooperated with another newspaper La France Socialiste to organize a new stage race called Circuit de France, though it proved to be short-lived as it was run only in 1942. According to some sources the French were unwilling to cooperate, even the riders needed to be threatened to take part in the race. (Turgis, [n.]) As L’Auto also gave in to the threats and violence some of the major one-day races such as Paris-Roubaix or Paris-Tours were organized by the magazine. For that cooperation the newspaper had to shut down after the French liberation. At that point a rivalry began for the rights to organize
the first Tour de France after the war. The contenders were once again magazines, who had to organize their candidate races in 1946. Right-wing newspapers L’Equipe and Le Parisien Libéré organized La Course du Tour de France, while the left-wing Sports and Miroir Sprint organized the Ronde the France. The major difference between the races was that the latter was contested by trade teams, while La Course invited 6 national teams, a French National team and 5 Regional teams of France. In the December of 1946 the UCI - which at the time still had its headquarters in Paris – decided to give the rights to L’équipe and Le Parisien Libéré. The official reason was that national teams were more appealing to the French public. Sports objected to this and to avoid the scandal and the political turmoil the rights were given to La Société du Parc du Princes, which was a neutral decision. Stating it was impossible to fund the race without a newspaper, La Société du Parc du Princes gave all the rights to L’Equipe. The race was funded by a right-wing politician and media tycoon Émilien Amaury, the owner of Le Parisien Libéré. (Demouveaux [2007].)

This case study of the biggest event of road cycling has multiple conclusions. One for sure is that professional sport cannot remain politically neutral and road cycling is no exception. Another is that road cycling was an extremely conservative and closed community at the time. Jacques Goddet - who was the deputy of Henri Desgrange before the war - became the head of the organization. He stayed in his position until 1989, another important year for international relations and politics. That shows the amount of capital one needs to run such an event. It is not the financial capital, but the network of connections that are essential in cycling just as in the field of international relations. In fact, this explains why the newspapers could monopolize the sport at the time and are still amongst the major stakeholders. The personal network that journalists have built up was the basis of racing. This network remains unnoticed until someone tries to organize a mass start competition without it. It happened to La Société du Parc du Prince in 1947.

II.5. Cold War
As the new world order took shape after World War II. Europe and professional road cycling as well were torn apart. As professional sports were officially non-existent in the socialist bloc, the cycling events at the Olympics were attended by amateur riders. Even the UCI had to split to form an amateur and a pro federation separately as it was advised by the International Olympic Committee. In 1965 the International Amateur Cycling
Federation (FIAC) and the International Professional Cycling Federation were formed with the headquarters in Rome and Luxemburg respectively. At the same time the UCI headquarters moved to Geneva, in search for a neutral place. As the Olympics became an amateur event, amateur cycling also flourished in the West. It became possible for riders to make a living out of cycling without turning professional. Still, it shows that the institutional structure of the sport was too rigid to match the new world order. The FIAC was founded 17 years after the Eastern bloc’s amateur racing scene was set up. (In 1948 the first Peace Race was held).

In fact, this separation triggered a development in professional cycling too. Trade teams started to grow once again. While amateur riders rode in national and regional colours, professional squads were sponsored by multinational giants such as the Peugeot-Dunlop team. Having two or three title sponsors also became common practice shortly after World War II. In 1962 the Tour de France and L’Equipe had to give in because of the financial pressure of those companies. Émilien Amaury took the rights over from L’Équipe and the biggest race on the calendar was contested by trade teams from that year. Soon, the Amaury Sports Organization (ASO) was founded, claiming the rights of the Tour de France until now.

Meanwhile in the Eastern bloc state-owned companies - as private sphere was non-existent – ran the teams and employed the riders, who were officially blue-collar workers. In reality these cyclists were focusing solely on competitive sport, visiting their workplaces few times each year. This setup justified the communist ideology, while it still enabled sportsmen to remain competitive to a certain extent. Unfortunately, by the nature of communism there were some practical issues which restricted their training. While in Western Europe, riders would have the trust in them to work alone and train according to their unique needs except for races and training camps, in Eastern Europe training rides were held 6 days a week with no excuse for missing out on them. That meant that the riders of each team had to live in the city where the club is placed. Everyone had the same training schedule regardless to the differences in skills, fitness levels and race schedules. On the other hand, it is important to note that from an ideological point of view sports results played an important role in the socialist bloc. That was especially
true for the Soviet Union and German Democratic Republic. “In particular the Olympics were seen as an arena to display the virtues of communism as a superior way of life compared to the decadent West. This use of sport as a political tool by the Eastern bloc was highly successful in terms of results achieved. When communist countries first made their debut at the 1952 summer Olympics they won 29 per cent of the medals; in 1976, it was 57 per cent. The USSR ‘won’ every Olympics, summer and winter (bar 1968 and the winters of 1980 and 1984) while between 1956 and 1976, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) advanced from 15th to 2nd in the medal table” (Carter [2012], p.101.)

Cold war had an immense effect on sports on both sides of the Iron Curtain as the two superpowers were racing against each other. Professional road cycling in the West continued its development on just about the same path as it restarted after World War II., but with the pressure to keep its leading role in the sport. Interestingly nor the Tour de France, nor the one-day classics, nor the other 3-week races got dominated by Soviet, American or German teams. They did not even attend. The biggest events of road cycling were organized by the aforementioned companies of the core countries in Western Europe and they were not yet well-known outside of Western Europe. No Olympic medals were given and national teams were not invited anymore. Nevertheless, Cold war reshaped the sport in the Eastern bloc. Road cycling was way less developed in these countries, the riders and organizers needed to prove themselves some way or another. For this reason,
the Peace Race – or the ‘Socialist Tour’ as some would call it – was organized every year from 1948. The participants of the two-week stage race were the best riders of the Eastern bloc competing in national teams and guest squads such as the French Amateur National Team, which were invited from the West. The race was dominated by the riders of East Germany and the Soviet Union, however cyclist from non-communist countries took some wins as well, even in the general classifications.

Meanwhile in Western Europe profit came into the main focus of road cycling. As the patriotic feelings after World War II. settled and decolonisation had happened by and large every race except for the World Championship and the Olympics were contested by trade teams. (Jakub [2008]) From the 1970s commercial interests overcame nationalism as the Belgian and French teams employed more and more foreign riders. (Van Hoorebeke [2011]) The teams became increasingly international as globalisation intensified just at the same time. It was only in the 1980s that the first riders from the US began racing in Europe.

II.6. The end of the bipolar world order
Later on, the Soviet Union fell apart and former socialist states were eager to join the West. These states faced the same problems regarding economy, trade, politics, sports and in road cycling as well. On one hand, suddenly enormous opportunities were available, on the other hand competition was stronger than what they could handle. Unfortunately for the cyclists of the Eastern bloc, the gap between their amateur field and the Western professional made it impossible to earn a living as a professional athlete. Only a handful of East-German athletes like Uwe Ampler or Jens Heppner could make it to professionals straightaway after 1990. With the collapse of the socialist amateur racing the international governing bodies of cycling also went through structural changes.

“After the Olympic movement abandoned the amateur/professional distinction following the 1992 Barcelona Games, the UCI followed suit in 1993. Both the amateur FIAC and the professional FICP were disbanded and once more the UCI became the single supreme world cycling body. Quite what became of the Eastern Bloc’s cycling apparatchiks who had long dominated the amateur FIAC’s corridors of power and critically shaped its politics and policies is unclear.” (Waters [2014])

Meanwhile the US enjoyed a short period of quasi-hegemony. The power of the country finally appeared in professional road cycling too, with some delay. An emblematic squad
was formed with the best American cyclists and riders from other countries in order to win Tour de France for no less than 7 times. For 6 of those 7 years the main sponsor was the United States Postal Service, a giant state-owned company. The team started with a strong support by the federal state, with little financial interest from the market. Politics and economy were the two most decisive factors in road cycling since its birth. Similar to an inert body in physics, professional road cycling is accelerating in the direction in which the two above mentioned forces are pointing.
III. Globalisation

International relations and economics have gone through numerous radical changes in the 20th century and in the early 21st century. As mentioned before Western Europe and the 5 core countries were and still are in the centre of road cycling. The economic and political processes in those states influence the sport in the most direct way. However, as we live in a world where interconnectedness is growing ever faster, other countries and regions of the planet are catching up quickly. Now Africa is the only continent where no World Tour events take place (UCI race of the highest category). By now most of the people following live broadcasts are outside of Europe. In 20 years cycling could be completely reshaped by a new global approach. With that in mind, looking back it is possible to determine certain periods when given countries or regions joined the world of cycling. These could be periods as long as 20 years and they always are parallel to the intensification of economic and/or political relations of the given area and Western Europe. Figure 2. below shows how the three grand tours have gone from a spectacle for the natives to being a globalised sporting event by displaying the share of foreign riders in the peloton. Note that native riders still make up around one fourth of the field in each of the stage races.

![Internationalization of the Grand Tours](image)

2. Figure The share of foreign athletes in Tour de France, Giro d’Italia and Vuelta a Espana (Van Reeth [2015] p.14.)
III.1. Other parts of Western Europe or the semi-periphery of road cycling

Scrutinising the area which I described as the heartland of the sport it is notable that it mostly covers the so-called “blue banana”, the most developed region of Europe, stretching between Northern Italy and South-East England. The question is why it is not covering the whole blue banana. The answer is again in international relations. When road cycling started to develop in these areas the United Kingdom was staying in its splendid isolation, whereas Germany and France were ignorant of each other until a decade after World War II.

In fact, the National Cyclist Union of the United Kingdom banned bike races on public roads, forcing riders to hold illegal time trials which could be kept secret. The ban lasted from the late 19th century to 1950 and had a lasting effect on British road cycling. The reasons for the ban are unclear, some state that it was a ban on a hobby of the lower classes, others think that the restriction came due to the isolation from the continent and there are theories mentioning safety reasons. (Messenger [1998].) Because of the ban few British cyclists could make it to the highest level. The first Britons rode Tour de France in 1937 in a mixed team. After World War II. as British isolation faded and the ban on road races was lifted, Tour of Britain was first organized in 1951. The first British team started the Tour de France in 1955. From then on Great Britain entered the world of professional road cycling step by step similarly to the process of getting into the European Integration.

As far as Germany is concerned, road cycling there was in a much better situation, however track cycling was a lot more popular as it was a spectacle for the everyman. They organized motor-paced events, where riders reached speeds well over 100km/h. Unfortunately for professional sports the situation was far from ideal as athletic performance was of secondary importance compared to the “show”.

Nevertheless, that changed when the country was torn apart after World War II. As it was mentioned before in the part discussing the road cycling of Cold War the two German states had a symbolic role which resulted in an immense competition in every aspect of life. By the end of the cold war both German states’ road cycling was among the strongest in the world. (Mangan [2003].) As a proof of that, riders from the German Democratic Republic were the only ones coming from the amateur ranks who were able to match the pace of the Westerners. Uwe Ampler, Jens Heppner and other world-class athletes turned pro right away in 1991 and made the selection for the biggest events. Pairing the financial
capital of West-Germany and the human capital from the Recruitment system of the East one of the strongest trade teams of the 1990s was formed. Team Telekom won Germany’s sole Tour de France title in 1997 with Jan Ullrich. However, the oversized East German sports talent management collapsed, the famous KJB sports school in Berlin closed. What is more after the constant doping scandals of the 2000s major TV channels stopped broadcasting road races. By the early 2010s Germany became what some called Europe’s pro cycling black hole. (Inner Ring [2014].)

Despite all these challenges all the Western European countries on the semi-periphery of road cycling are very well part of the sport’s global structure with professional teams like Team Sky and Bora-Hansgrohe and multiple UCI WorldTour race days.

III.2. U.S. – The pendulum swing between isolation and intervention
Major economic and military force in the globalized world from the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. It had a strongly fluctuating relation to Western Europe and professional road cycling as well, depending on its policies regarding foreign relations. The United States always had its doctrines deciding its approach towards other continents. At times it isolated itself from the external world as much as possible, on other occasions it acted as “the world’s policeman”. That change in US foreign policy is often called the pendulum swing. If we use this perspective to scrutinise the professional road cycling of the country we can discover quite a few matches.

Before World War I, when the first road races were born in Europe, the foreign policy of the United States could be described with the Monroe doctrine. It focused on the American continent and isolated itself from others including Europe. Only after World War I did road cycling caught the attention of America. The Amateur Bicycle League of America was founded in 1920 in New York. Still it was an amateur federation founded relatively late compared to any European state (including the East). Only after World War II, when the US pendulum of foreign policy swang to interventionism did professional road cycling appear there. However, this did not mean a powerful role in the sport. As the communist countries were not present at the professional races and the Olympics was an amateur event, US cycling was under no pressure to counter its Soviet opponent. Furthermore, the biggest events were in Europe, including the world championships.

There was little interest in road cycling among the population. The US had its own sports and its own sport leagues, presenting an entirely different business model from those in
European sports. In fact, the isolation of American sporting events and leagues such as NBA, NFL or NHL are very much in place to the present. 100% based on financial interest these leagues do not recognise any superior authority like an international federation, the WADA (World Antidoping Agency) or the IOC (international Olympic Committee). The perfect example of that is the NHL boycott of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.

As cycling in the US did not have the popularity in order to create its own league, riders had to go on European tournaments if they wanted to compete at the highest level. That only became possible from the late 1970s as commercial flights became affordable for a wider range of people. From then on club teams and different age groups of the US National Team went on European training camps and racing tournaments. Moreover, after World War II a generation of people grew up in internationalism, whereas previous generations favoured their isolationism. Road cycling finally became popular in the USA after Gregory J. Lemond’s success in the most prestigious races. Lemond was the first American to win Tour de France in 1986. Later he won the race in 1989 and 1990 at the same time as cold war came to an end. However, he was riding for European clubs, wearing the colours of European sponsors and following the advices of European coaches.

The boom of US cycling came after 1990 as communism was no opponent anymore and amateur cycling became less prestigious. The ideologic boundaries disappeared and sports started getting professionalized in post-communist states. As international relations effect road cycling with a certain delay, the Olympic road race became open for professionals in 1996. The US federation changed its name and underwent basic structural reorganization in 1995, the USAC moved its headquarters to Colorado. The summer games at Atlanta proved to be rather disastrous for American road cycling. However, their program was on its way, it only needed some encouragement. In the 1980s there was a team aiming at the preparation of the US men’s Olympic road team. Sunkyong became a pro team in 1992 (the last year when the Olympics was an amateur event), however it struggled until 1996. That was the year when the infamous U.S. Postal Service Team started. It started with the aim no lesser than becoming the best team in the world and winning the Tour de France with an American rider. From 1999 until 2004 Lance Armstrong realized that goal by winning 6 Tour titles in US Postal colours, plus a 7th one riding for the successor Discovery Channel Team. (Procyclingstats [2017].)
Nevertheless, it was about that time that the United States’ foreign policy started to slowly turn back towards isolationism. American sponsors left the sport and today there is only one US based team in the WorldTour. However, it could be argued whether this is a result of a change in foreign policy or the doping scandals of recent years involving the U.S. Postal Service Team and Lance Armstrong.

III.3. Australia – becoming a major force isolated from Europe
Another former British colony with a rather silent approach towards international politics, but with a stable society, strong economy and indeed with a solid cycling culture which developed isolated from Europe and became world-class using its inner sources.

Road races started as early as in Western Europe, in the late 19th century events already covered long distances and the sport professionalized quickly due to the attracting prizes. In Victoria state the sport was a lot more popular than in Great Britain.

“The riding was hard and rough because there was so much at stake, given the average annual income of the day (circa £120 in 1904). Victorian professional races alone distributed a reported £6,348 in total prize-money during the 1897-98 season and prize-money for single Australian races – £400 at the Westral and Austral Wheel Races, and £800 for the place-getters at the seven-race card of the ANA races of 1899, for example – ranked with that offered in North America or Europe.” (Fitzpatrick [2013] p.136.)

Discovering the early start and the level of racing one would question if Australia can be viewed as much of a “core country” in cycling as those in Western Europe. Although the events were well-organized and as Fitzpatrick described the prizes were high, the competition was lesser. There are two explanations for that. First is the lack of the nationalist element, which is essential to European cycling to the very day. Nations have their symbolic races such as the Tour de France or the Giro d’Italia, or the Tour of Flanders. Some of the courses take us through historical places as the Paris-Roubaix runs through the battlefields of World War I, or as the Tour de France finishes at the Champs Elysées. In addition to that there is the competition between riders of different nationalities regardless of whether they ride for their trade teams. All these elements were partly or completely lacking in Australia at the time. The second factor is that races were organized by companies other than newspapers. Consequently, journalists were not as interested in creating a myth, a culture around the races as their Western European colleagues.
Despite the smaller public interest and the lesser competition Australian professional road cycling produced a solid development on its own. As the country became independent in 1901 Great Britain’s ban on road races did not harm the sport. (the ban in fact was not in place in British colonies as the idea of road cycling as a sport came later in those states) The first Australians who reportedly took part in an international road race were Don Kirkham and Iddo Munro at the 1914 Tour de France. (Fry [2014]) However Australia could only join the world of international professional road cycling after technological advancements made the communication and the transportation between Australia and Western Europe fast and convenient. The movement of goods and people to and from the old continent accelerated in the 1970s. The same progress went on with cycling teams and riders, however with a delay of 10 years. In that sense Australia’s relation to the pro cycling world shows similarities to that of the USA, nevertheless there is an important difference. Since the 1980s Australia has a constantly increasing share in professional road cycling, whereas the US had better and worse periods. In 1990 Australia only had 25 professional riders accounting for 3% of all pros, that number was 101 in 2015, which means a 6% share of the world’s cyclists. Over this period the number of teams increased from 2 to 8 (from 2.5% to 3.5% of the world total). (Van Reeth [2015]) At the moment Australia has only one WorldTour event on its race calendar, the Tour Down Under since 2008. However it is important to note that the pro cycling season is still designed around the major Western European races, meaning that events in the Southern hemisphere are in the so-called off-season. Then one has to mention the transportation and other expenses, moreover the need for acclimatization. If we consider all these facts it is clear that Australian cycling can only progress and continue its growth if the UCI calendar undergoes major reforms. The idea of a new global calendar is further examined in Chapter V. discussing the future of cycling and a possibility of a new league.

III.4. Eastern Europe and the ongoing influence of the communist era
Similarly to Australia, the first road races and the institutional structure of the sport was already made in the late 19th century. A case study example is that of Hungary (at the time autonomous state in Austro-Hungary).

There the cycling federation was founded in 1894. In the same year the first long-distance race was organized on the 200kms between Budapest and Pécs. However just as it was the case with Australia, something was missing. Cycling teams were integrated in multi-sport clubs run by the state, the races were also organized by public entities. The capital
was still majorly concentrated in the hands of the historical aristocracy, newspapers did not create the myth of the cycling hero and the culture of road cycling did not sink in people’s mind as it happened in Western Europe. Cycling culture was rather close to that of Germany as velodromes were built and motorpaced events ruled the scene. Road cycling was in the shadows of track racing, but both took a major blow when the government introduced a new tax on bicycles in 1899. (Németh [2012] The German influence on Eastern European cycling stayed in place until World War II.

As it was mentioned before, the socialist system needed sport success after the war to prove its superiority. However, the amateur riders from Eastern Europe rarely found themselves competing against the Western professionals. In practice that meant that road cycling of the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic were developed to a world-class level, while other countries did not really concentrate on it. All countries of the Warsaw Pact had their infrastructure, institutions, federations, clubs, races etc. but most of them were of secondary importance behind the USSR and GDR flagships. They needed to produce cyclists who could compete in the Peace Race. (2-week stage race, “the socialist Tour”). Czech (cycling was rather strong in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia) and Polish cycling were also noticeably higher level than other parts of the socialist bloc. The reason behind that is simple. The Peace Race was organized between Berlin, Prague and Warsaw, starting and finishing in different locations every year. The organizing countries could allocate a large amount of resources for developing their road cycling sport. The table below prepared by Waters shows the number of Olympic medals by the cyclist of the Eastern bloc. The 4 countries mentioned won 52 of the 159 medals up for grab between 1956 and 1988. Nevertheless, the structure of this amateur cycling world was based on labour unions and sports clubs of state-owned companies which later proved to be disastrous.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Gold Medal</th>
<th>Silver Medal</th>
<th>Bronze Medal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Germany</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Table Olympic medals won by the cyclists of the Eastern bloc between 1956 and 1988 (Waters [2014])
After the Berlin wall came down, competitive cycling collapsed in those countries except for Russia and Germany. Only a few lucky ones of the riders, coaches and team staff could continue in the Western professional scene.

“The sudden implosion of the state socialist regimes in Eastern Europe in the late-1980s/early-1990s was followed by the rapid demise of their systematic training programmes for creating cycling champions. For some of the riders involved it was the end of their cycling careers; for others it meant continuing in the sport under new national identities; for others again it provided an opportunity to enter the lucrative ranks of sponsored Western European cycling teams. The numerous support staff in these programmes – coaches, trainers, sports scientists, medical professionals, soigneurs and mechanics – faced similar dilemmas and choices.”

(Waters [2014].)

As the Eastern European integration into market economy and the European community progressed professional road cycling had to re-establish itself in a different environment. Poland is a case study example of that, where the state-financed talent management programs are producing fully-skilled athletes for the trade teams. At the same time sponsors of the same trade teams support the national team and high schools which offer special study programs for young cyclists. By 2015 Poland had a WorldTour level stage race, more than 50 professional riders and 6 pro teams. (Van Reeth [2015]) Although road cycling in other countries of Eastern Europe are not in a favourable situation like the one described, they all have professional riders, UCI ranked races and most of them have continental teams as well. As a consequence, in 2015 the number of professional riders and teams were lower in the core countries of the sport than in all other European countries. Both parts had circa 60 teams and 800 riders, which meant that Europe still had roughly 60% of the teams and riders at the time. One could argue that still those 4 countries match the other 30, however the tendency is also important in this case. In 1990 the core countries had almost twice as many squads and athletes as the rest of the continent. (at the time Europe had 80% of all professional road cycling).

That said it is obvious that the region became an integral part of the globalized professional road cycling by 2015. As a proof of that the last 4 editions of the World Championships were won by riders from the former states of the socialist bloc.
III.5. Russia and the former Soviet Union

Within Eastern European road cycling, Russia and the former Soviet Union were and are still in a special situation which comes from the desire of being a global superpower. The Russian/Soviet policies to emphasize that entity had and still has a profound effect on sports. Regarding professional road cycling, the shift from state-funded sport to a market-economy business did not happen.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union Russian cycling turned into a mixture of state-funded professional sport and games between oligarchs who tried showing their prestige by running successful teams. In fact, the political turmoil did not change the high-level work carried out by sports scientists, coaches and the athletes. Nevertheless, there was a huge difference because of the international mobility of people. Russian cyclists were free to ride for foreign teams. Some of them even changed nationality like Andrei Tchmil did. However due to the massive capital flowing in the sport Russian road cycling remained competitive. The migration of athletes became possible both way and by now a number of Western European athletes ride for Russian teams such as Katusha or Rusvelo. Similarly to Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have their state-funded cycling project which do not only provide opportunities for their own citizens, but are attracting athletes, coaches and other professionals from all around the world.

On the other hand, ex-Soviet countries like Ukraine and Belarus do not have the resources, nor the international relations to develop the sport. These two states are the case-study example of the communist sport-school system remaining in place after 1990. After the Soviet Union disbanded they got caught up in the conflict zone between the European Union and Russia, and 30 years later these countries are still isolated by both. Against all odds road cyclists are rising to the international ranks, the ruins of the Soviet recruitment system are still producing talents. However, the professionalization came relatively late. Currently Ukraine and Belarus each have only one professional road cycling team. Both the Kolss Cycling Team and Minsk Cycling Club are financed by their national cycling federation. Also, Lithuania is worth mentioning as another state in that region known for its world-class cyclists. Although the country does not have a continental team, the national teams are functioning. Furthermore, this year there are 3 Lithuanian riders in the UCI WorldTour which is an especially high number compared to a population of less than 3 million. (Lithuanian Cycling Federation [2018])
In conclusion it can be stated that the communism still has an ongoing effect on the professional road cycling of Eastern Europe and the successor states of the Soviet Union. Moreover, it has a global effect too. As road cycling sponsorship is still not profitable in these areas and there is a pressure on governments to keep the sport operating, they invest in it. As a consequence, trade teams are becoming less and less competitive. As of today, most of the top-tier cycling teams are dependent on some kind of state support.

III.6. Latin America – The land of the physiologically most talented, yet troubled cyclists
Latin America is famous for being the homeland for world-class cyclists, especially when it comes to grand tours like the Tour de France. One could assume this has little to do with international relations or economy. It is the natural talent of those grown-up at high altitude that made the riders of the continent so successful. However, if we take a closer look at the pro cycling ranks, we find that most of the successful Latino riders are Colombian.

International relations once again had a huge impact as Colombia developed a cycling culture which only could be compared to that of Western European nations. After World War II, export of coffee and drugs made it possible to develop the transportation infrastructure. The connection to Western Europe was obvious and as road quality improved the Vuelta a Colombia, the national stage race of Colombia started in 1951. It has been organized every year since then. However top pros usually avoid it as high temperatures and altitude make up for a race too hard for the early season (it was always held in January or February). As the economy is still struggling due to organized crime, cycling is considered as a way out of poverty. Currently 8 Colombian cyclists are riding for WorldTour teams. However right now there is no team established for the development of young Colombian riders like the former Colombia-Coldeportes Pro-continental squad. Coldeportes – the Ministry of Sports - decided not to fund the project anymore. The team could not find a sponsor from the Colombian market as they mostly competed at high-ranked European events.

Other Latin-American countries have their races and riders as well, however the road cycling culture is somewhat lesser due to the influence of the US. Still Venezuela is worth mentioning with its pro riders and national tour. In addition, Tour de San Luis – an early season race popular amongst the top professionals – was organized in Argentina until its last edition in 2016. Whether the continent could stabilize itself politically and
economically – with special attention to economic integrations like Mercosur – it could become a major force in the sport with the most talented road cyclists born there.

III.7. The Far East
Right now, the lion’s share of the world’s industrial production takes place in South East Asia. That is especially true for the manufacturing of bicycles and components. The largest producer of components, Shimano has its headquarters in Japan, however most big brands are still based in Western Europe. Nevertheless, only the most high-tech frames, wheels and components are produced in the old continent. All in all, China, Japan and the little tigers make the bikes and now inevitable are present at the pro cycling scene.

There is little culture of road cycling at the Far East. The only traditional cycling events are the Japanese keirin races, even there the emphasis is on gambling instead of athletic performance. In the second part of the 20th century as the connections with Europe strengthened – once again after the imperialism – the idea of road cycling as a sport spread to the region. However, there was no sufficient audience yet. That only came around 2000 as middle and upper class began embracing sports and healthy lifestyle. As the financial capital was there, races got organized, teams were established at a speed similar to the incredible urbanization process. Since 2011 China has a WorldTour race on the calendar. Until its final edition in 2014 the Tour of Beijing was Asia’s only WorldTour event. After organizational problems and health concerns it ceased to exist, but with Tour of Guanxi China once again bounced back in cycling’s top level in 2017. (de Neef [2017])

In addition to their success in organizing top-tier events, China and Japan both have riders who successfully finished the Tour de France. As road cycling is a relatively new sport in East Asia, riders are less trained both physically and technically, however sponsorship deals could get them into professional teams. For instance, Taiwanese bicycle brand Merida got a young Thai rider, Feng Chun Kai into the Italian WorldTour team Lampre-Merida in 2015. Currently Shimano and Merida are the biggest Asian players in road cycling, sponsoring multiple WorldTour squads. Recently the Chinese Wanda Group, a media empire wanted to change that. It intended to buy RCS and ASO, the two biggest organizers owning the 3 Grand Tours and 4 of cycling’s biggest one-day races. Their plan was unsuccessful for now, however the Far East is now into the world of road cycling and its gaining territory quickly.
III.8. Middle East – Buying its way into the sport

Similarly to the Far East, the Middle East is on its way to get into professional road cycling through race organization and team sponsorship. Naturally one needs substantial financial reserves to be able to fund that. Thus, only those countries of the region which are rich in natural resources can buy themselves into the sport.

First organized in 2002, Tour of Qatar was the first big race of the region, immediately attended by top European professionals. There were huge prizes up for grab and it provided a great opportunity for early-season preparations in a warm climate. The event soon got the ProTour and then the WorldTour status, until its last edition in 2016. On the sideline it is worth mentioning, that ASO, cycling’s most powerful actor was the organizer of the race. Since 2010 Tour of Oman is organized as a .HC category race. Similarly to the Tour of Qatar, it is held in February and organized by ASO. Then in 2014 came the Dubai Tour, .HC race organized by the Dubai Sports Council and RCS Sports.

The battle for prestige amongst these oil-rich nations resulted not only in the aforementioned races, but the purchase of cycling teams. Both Bahrein and Abu Dhabi have WorldTour teams from 2017. Team UAE Emirates bought the licence of the above mentioned Lampre-Merida team and inherited part of its riders. In addition, it signed further riders, mostly from Italy. It is funded by the First Abu Dhabi Bank and the National Bank of Abu Dhabi. Bahrein-Merida was started as a new team (not purchasing an old licence), but it is based on the other half of the Lampre team, inheriting its Asian riders, supported by Merida. The team is financed by the government of Bahrein. (Brown [2016])

Having WorldTour races and teams, the region has yet to produce athletic talents. Possible reasons for that include climate and the lack of middle classes in the society.

The region is a case study example of an unsustainable sponsorship model, where the returns are minor compared to the investment. A sign of that was the cancellation of the 2017 Tour of Qatar. The organizers claimed that it happened due to the lack of funding. The race was not held since then. (BBC [2016]) I will further discuss the issue of ill sponsorship models in Chapter IV.

III.9. Africa

The only region which is yet to join the pro cycling world is Africa. Despite an operating WorldTour team (Dimension Data of South Africa) the continent and its states have not
accumulated the financial and social capital to organize top-tier races, neither to be competitive at those. Few African-born riders could make it to Dimension Data and became pro cyclists. Hopefully the situation will improve with recent initiatives such as the talent management program of the UCI World Cycling Centre. Hopefully the continent will soon reach a new phase of post-colonial development where the growth of the economy will be mainly based on inner resources. That would allow Africa to support their own professional teams and athletes as well.

IV. Economics of Professional road cycling

It is intriguing to look at the mixture of traditional elements and the features of a modern business in today’s pro cycling scene. Now that the history of the sport and the characteristics of road cycling in the major world regions are described it is obvious that it is about much more than simple commercial interest. In fact, road cycling in the form as it is existing today is not profitable for the majority of companies. The ambiguities of the institutional structure and the inequalities amongst the major stakeholders create unnecessary obstacles that teams and their sponsors need to overcome.

IV.1. The major stakeholders

In professional road cycling there are three actors who are present at any event. The organizer, the teams who are invited, their riders. There is an additional fourth actor including the representatives of the former 3, though it is more than that. It is also taking care of other cycling disciplines like BMX, track cycling or Para-Cycling. Moreover, it has to take into consideration the rules made by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). These different actors, companies and international organizations all have an influence on the pro cycling world.
IV.1.1. Organizers
As I emphasized it many times, the most powerful actors in road cycling are race organizers. Newspapers and their journalist invented the sport’s greatest races, the Grand Tours and the Monuments as well. They organized them first and made them legendary in their articles. Now there are separate offices and agencies specialized on organizing sports events, however they are still somehow connected to media groups, tycoons and their interests. Since the foundation of the sport they never let the control out of their hands and still they are the ones getting most of the profit through TV and other media revenues. If we compare the two tables below, we can see that the media never let the races out of its interest. However, as media tycoons emerged the rights of the greatest races now mostly belong to only two companies. Once again, the best case study example is that of the Tour de France and its actual organizer, the ASO.

It is important to note that since L’Equipe got the rights of the Tour, the “Amaury empire” became the strongest single actor in cycling. In 1962 Émilien Amaury took over the rights formally too. Soon the Amaury Sports organization was founded. Later it became part of the Éditions Phillipe Amaury (EPA) group, founded by the son of Émilien Amaury. Today EPA is owned by the widow of Phillippe and run by his son Jean-Etienne. ASO is currently responsible for the organization of a large scale of events in numerous sports such as golf, road cycling, rallye and sailing. The cycling events include the Tour de France, the Vuelta a Espana, Paris-Roubaix and Liége-Bastogne-Liége just to name the biggest ones. In recent years there were rumours about the Chinese Wanda Group buying ASO, however that did not turn into reality. (Brown, [2016])
Race | Location | Distance (km) | (First) Organizer
--- | --- | --- | ---
Bordeaux-Paris | France | 572 | Véloce-Sport
Paris-Brest-Paris | France | 1200 | Le Petit Journal
Liége-Bastogne-Liège | Belgium | 250 | L'Expresse
Paris-Brussels | France-Belgium | 407 | La Bicyclette
Paris-Roubaix | France | 280 | Roubaix Velodrome builders
Paris-Tours | France | 250 | Paris-Vélo
Tour de France | France | 2428 | L'Auto
Tour of Lombardy | Italy | 230 | La Gazzetta dello Sport
Milan-San Remo | Italy | 288 | La Gazzetta dello Sport
Tour of Italy | Italy | 2448 | La Gazzetta dello Sport
Tour of Flanders | Belgium | 324 | Sportwereld

2. Table The first European road races and their organizers (Van Reeth [2015])

Race | Location | Distance (km) | Current Organizer
--- | --- | --- | ---
Milaan-San Remo | Italy | 298 | RCS Sports
Tour of Flanders | Belgium | 260 | Flanders Classics
Paris-Roubaix | France | 256 | ASO
Liége-Bastogne-Liège | Belgium | 260 | ASO
Tour of Lombardy | Italy | 230 | ASO
Tour of Italy | Italy | ~3400 | RCS Sports
Tour de France | France | ~3400 | ASO
Tour of Spain | Spain | ~3400 | ASO

3. Table Currently the biggest events are owned by two agencies

It is worth noting, that organizers of road races do not have a representative body as teams, riders or the organizers of cyclo-cross events. There are multiple reasons for that, but it is mainly due to the diversity in the races’ function and the organizers’ interests.

Naturally not only media groups organize cycling races. There are also state actors present as they want to increase their revenues from tourism or show off their prestige that way. They are less interested in TV revenues, in fact some of them are willing to pay for channels to broadcast their races as it is in the case of Tour of Croatia, Tour d’ Hongrie and Eurosport. Moreover, state-funded organizations are more likely to partner up with local companies instead of buying their services.

The best example of a road race boosting tourism in partnership with local companies is the Santos Tour Down Under, which was the first event to obtain ProTour – and later
WorldTour – status outside Europe in 2008. The event is financed by the South Australian government and managed by Events South Australia. The government is in a close partnership with hundreds of local companies providing services and organizing events relating to the Tour Down Under. The number of spectators on the roadside was an estimated 840,000 in 2017 over the 9 days of the race. That resulted in an economic impact of circa 56.5 million AUD. The number of spectators reached 800,000 when the first Australian WorldTour team (Orica-GreenEDGE) was founded in 2012. That is why it can be assumed that the majority of visitors and spectators are Australian citizens. (Tour Down Under [2018]).

IV.1.2. Teams and sponsors
The second of the four major stakeholders in road cycling are teams and their sponsors. Unfortunately, they appear powerless compared to race organizers. The reason behind that is very simple. Their expenses and incomes are a lot smaller than those of the organizers. They are smaller in terms of financial and human capital, they have lesser connections as well. There are existing unions that include the majority of WorldTour teams, however those are weak and fragile. The AIGCP (Association Internationale des Groupes Cyclistes Professionels) is the official representative body of the teams at the UCI. Nevertheless, new interest groups including different professional teams were more dominant, as there are numerous internal divisions between professional teams. (Van Reeth [2015]) Velon, a union of professional squads and event organizers is probably the most successful initiative of the recent years, considering that all the 18 WorldTour squads are active members. Led by former president of the AIGCP and current team manager of Education-First Drapac it is aiming at a change in road cycling’s current business model. That is not surprising if we consider that teams usually exist only for a couple of years before dismantling and the competition for funds is more desperate than ever. The cause of this uncertainty is an ill sponsorship model which the sport is still following. There is a company running the team which sells the rights of advertisements such as naming rights, the space on the riders’ kits and on the team vehicles. There are other companies – the sponsors – which buy these rights to advertise themselves. Up to this point it works like a potentially profitable business. However, a share of the TV revenues is only given to teams at the Abu Dhabi Tour, official jersey sales are also low due to the availability of cheaper copies and a lack of fan culture. Moreover, there is no entrance fee at the events, anyone can stand by the roadside and cheer for the riders. In this setup the companies running the cycling teams are financially vulnerable as they are
almost exclusively dependent on sponsors’ investments. The financial stability of a team is solely dependent on the interests and goodwill of their main sponsors. These investors have very different ideas and objectives depending on their nature, whether they support cycling to boost their sales or their prestige is the main concern.

National teams

The oldest, classical type of a team is a national team. The national federation covers the costs, sometimes supported by a multinational company based in the country (e.g. CCC in Poland). National teams can start at the Olympics, the World Championships and the European Championships and in events .2 or .1 by the UCI. All this means that national teams in road cycling are not present at the highest (WorldTour) level. In addition, road cycling has only four events at the Olympics, where advertisements are strictly limited as well. Consequently, they have little value from the perspective of a potential investor from the market. Most national teams are run exclusively state-funded. Moreover, they are not the employers of their own athletes as the riders have contracts with their club teams.

Trade teams

Trade teams are in a somewhat better position, they might have title sponsors and athletes have obligations towards them, laid down in their contracts. In theory they operate by the rules of capitalism. They exist on three levels: Continental, Pro-Continental and WorldTour.

Continental level teams can start .2, .1 and .HC category races which means that similarly to national teams they have a very limited media presence. Their sponsors might be states, bigger teams recruiting riders or entrepreneurs starting up a new business in the sport. Riders at this level have no minimum wage, the majority of them are amateurs. 8-16 riders make up the team roster. Basically, anyone can set up a team at this level, provided they have the following: 8 riders’ contracts, health insurance, 10 000 EUR registration fee and 5 000 EUR bank guarantee. Currently 186 of them exist.

Professional road cycling really starts at Pro-Continental level as riders have a minimum salary and teams are required to have a certain financial background which must be proved by a bank guarantee of no less than 300 000 EUR. In addition, the teams must have riders with enough points in their respective continental ranks (such as Europe Tour
for a team based in Europe). Only 26 teams can get a second-tier licence. They have 16-25 riders and they can start .1, .HC and .WT races. There is a huge fight for WorldTour invitations amongst these teams as there are 27 squads for 4-7 wild cards available for those events. The existence of these teams is dominantly dependent on the number of their WorldTour wildcards. For instance, a Pro-Continental Italian team is highly unlikely to have support for the next year without a Giro d’Italia invitation.

The 18 WorldTour teams are the cream of the sport. Similar regulations apply to them as to the Pro-Continental level, however the numbers are higher and the rules are stricter. The bank guarantee required is minimum 1 000 000 EUR, the number of riders is 25-30. Most importantly the team is required to have riders with a sufficient number of points in the WorldTour classification. As the points are connected to the riders, not the teams, WorldTour spots are decided rather by the team budget than previous results. Nevertheless, if a team can keep its sponsors or find new ones, they have a good chance to stay in pro cycling’s premier league. The costs of setting up a whole new team encourage new sponsors to fund existing teams who have yet to secure a deal for the future. There are typically three types of sponsors: market actors, state actors and sugar daddies. The latter two are dominant in cycling which can be considered unhealthy and unprofessional as the emphasis is on politics and networking instead of results and market value. I will further discuss this issue in this chapter.

IV.1.3. Riders
Although cycling became a professional sport relatively early, riders’ organizations remained unsuccessful throughout the 20th century. The current riders’ organization was founded in May 1999 after Marco Pantani’s exclusion from the Giro d’Italia due to suspicious blood values. The association of professional cyclists is located in Estavayer-le-Lac, Switzerland and its president since 2011 is ex-riider Gianni Bugno. ACP was successful, representing the riders in financial and safety issues. The introduction of minimal wages and extreme weather protocols were its main achievements. On the other hand, the organization came short when addressing the topics of pro cyclists’ pension and legal protection of riders. All in all, riders are still the most vulnerable and least organized of cycling’s stakeholders.

IV.2. Challenges
As of today, professional road cycling faces a set of unresolved challenges. The lack of redistribution causes ill sponsorship practices to be accepted. Thus, financial insecurity
became the norm for cycling teams. Moreover, doping and technological fraud made the credibility of the sport diminish. In addition, the current format of the WorldTour calendar and its events are not keeping up with the demands of the customers, the cycling fans. The largest race organizers are interested in maintaining the status quo. It means that a unified race calendar cannot be created. Moreover, the sport is slow to adapt to the revolution of telecommunication. Shorter, more explosive racing only exists in an initiative called ‘Hammer Series’. Live on-board cameras and riders’ data such as heart rate, power and cadence are only available for a handful of races. However quick reforms on these areas are necessary to keep cycling attractive from a marketing point of view.

IV.2.1. Consistent, easy-to-understand, unified racing calendar
The first challenge that contemporary road cycling must face is the lack of consistency, the lack of unity amongst races. If we ask who is the best cyclist or which is the best cycling team on the planet the answer is pretty simple: Whoever wins Tour de France and his squad. Now millions of cycling fans would shake their heads in disagreement. There is a bunch of prestigious races outside of the Tour, such as cycling 5 monuments, the Giro d’Italia or the Vuelta a Espana. In fact, the Tour de France is only 1 race with 21 stages or race days. Now the “unified” WorldTour calendar includes 37 events, 167 race days in 4 continents, 15 countries starting in Australia on the 16th of January and ending in China on the 21st of October. Alternatively, we can consider the world’s best cyclist whoever wins the overall points classification of the UCI WorldTour series. In fact, that would be very straightforward, many sports have a world cup calendar with a series of events. Whoever shows a consistently high performance and collects the most points would be crowned world champion. Unfortunately, this does not apply to professional cycling. At least half of the events on the calendar do not have any prestige amongst the cream of the sport, top pro riders compete “only” about 70 days a year. In addition, there are multiple overlaps in an overcrowded calendar, challenging the infrastructure of each and every professional team. That burden of having to be present where none of one’s target group of customers is following the race is uneconomical and it could blow away the sponsors’ confidence. For instance, there is Amgen Tour of California in May running parallel with the second week of Giro d’Italia. On one hand it is wonderful that the sport is now globalized and the sport is more popular than ever in the US. On the other hand, it is ridiculous that a European team with European sponsors is obliged to be there, whereas only the craziest cycling fans in Europe keep an eye on the American race. Still, every WorldTour squad has to be present at both events with their vehicles, staff members,
riders and all the infrastructure. If we look at the schedule we can immediately understand why there is no Italian top-tier team anymore. On top of that, watching a first-class road race, the American public will not see the world’s best cyclists because they are in Europe.

In order to resolve that problem, we have to see the reasons behind. The major cause of the lack of unity is that there is no balance of power amongst the major stakeholders in men’s professional road cycling. The organizers of the biggest European races are the strongest actors with the most capital, financial, human and the network as well. The UCI cannot take control over the dates on the calendar. Moreover, the international federation is in a crossfire of opposing interests in between the more established European organizers, teams and the newcomers from other continents. Currently European organizers like ASO and RCS sports are in control of the situation, however the newcomers have a vast amount of financial capital what they are willing to spend on establishing new events. Such races right now are taking place either in the early season as the Tour of Dubai or late season like the Tour of Guanxi. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen if that will be the case 10 years later. Balance of power amongst cycling’s stakeholders is the key to overcome this challenge.

IV.2.2. Funding and the distribution of profit

Following the previous part many questions arise, most importantly that how organizers like ASO and RCS Sports can maintain their power.

Firstly, because they are integrated into large and powerful media empires and they are not exclusively dependent on cycling. Secondly because of the enormous costs of entry to the market. Previously I described the costs of setting up a professional team. Those expenses do not even come close to that of creating a race which is as prestigious as the three Grand Tours. Thirdly and most importantly organizers created a business model where they receive the vast majority of the profit from the sport. They get the TV revenues, they charge towns for race starts and finishes, they even claim trademarks of geographical names where their races run through. Moreover, they also have multinational companies as sponsors.

If those profits were shared amongst all the stakeholders the long-term financial security of teams and riders would be provided. Moreover, the UCI could be made at least partly an independent body representing all the participants of the sport.
IV.2.3. Ill sponsorship practices
As teams are not getting a share from media revenues, official jersey sales and other potential sources of income are not exploited by the current business model, teams are almost exclusively relying on their sponsors. Besides the high market entry costs, the running costs of teams are increasing, mainly because of the competition and the ever-higher salaries of riders and staff members. Currently the number of employees with a full-season contract in a WordTour squad is somewhere between 70-100. If we add the number of temporary staff members (especially for events running overseas), the payroll can include up to 500 people. The salaries usually are 70-80% of total expenditures. (Van Reeth [2015]) Nevertheless, it is important to note, that sponsorship deals can include non-monetary support, such as equipment and logistics. As a consequence, total costs and total revenues are not fully transparent. One would think that all those colourful jerseys and logos are from publicly-traded companies, TNCs, which are keen on building their brands with the help of cycling. However, in the meantime that is not the case.

Due to the high cost of human capital in cycling and the lesser role of national teams, state actors come into play. They create what I call a “hybrid sponsorship model”. In fact, most top-tier teams receive support from their native states in one way or another, the question is the amount of state interference. For instance, Astana and Katusha are almost exclusively funded by the Kazakh and the Russian state. On the other end of the spectrum there are Bora-Hanßgrohe and Team Sunweb operating where each one of the sponsors hope to get a return higher than the investment. Of course, there is the question whether we should separate the marketing of a brand from the marketing of the state. The two are very different and the state’s game for prestige can destroy professional cycling, as a country has huge reserves to support a business which is not profitable anymore. If a team is not funded by a publicly-traded company, it is not limited to a traditional return on investment model, thus it has a very remarkable competitive advantage. As a proof of the hybrid sponsorship model here stands the Statement of Comprehensive Income of Tour Racing Ltd. This company runs the famous Team Sky professional squad, which has the highest budget of all cycling teams. Note, that the profit before tax is a shy 35 000 pounds, which is roughly 0.1% of the annual budget.
If we look at the revenues, we can see that more than 85% (26 736 000 Pounds) is coming from the sponsor(s).

Moreover, in his book Van Reeth described another phenomenon called “cycling hobbyism”.

“However, one of the peculiarities of sponsorship of top cycling teams is the persistence of cycling hobbyism, i.e. the fact that teams are sponsored by wealthy benefactors not for commercial reasons but merely because of their passion for the sport. This type of managers or team owners risks acting in an economically irrational manner because unless they are well surrounded, they lack expert
knowledge to curb their enthusiasm for the sport. As explained in Chap. 4, we could conclude that in 2015 arguably six of the 17 WorldTour teams are supported by these so-called “sugar daddy type sponsors”. Wealthy benefactors or oligarch business men are Zdenek Bakala (Etixx–Quick-Step), Andy Rihs (BMC Racing Team), Gerry Ryan (Orica-GreenEDGE), Igor Makarov (Katusha), Oleg Tinkov (Tinkoff-Saxo) and Michel Thétaz (IAM Cycling).

While some of these benefactors (such as Zdenek Bakala or Gerry Ryan) remain discrete when it comes to the day-to-day management of the team, others (such as Oleg Tinkov) are closely monitoring and even interfering with everyday team decisions. It is dangerous though to allow personal objectives to be fostered alongside the company goals. Decision-makers could be amateuristic in the selection and development of sport sponsorship offerings. This danseuse du président, spouse-driven sponsorship or management by hobby (Crimmins and Horn 1996) was typical of “old sponsor cultures”, when the sport manager’s job was finished after the purchase of the promotional sport rights. Because of hobbyism, the sport sponsorship projects could be an end in itself instead of a means of promotion. Indeed, the success or failure of integrated communication depends on the managers’ ability (or lack of it) to maintain a rational distance from the sport sponsorship events (Lagae 2005).” (Van Reeth [2015] p.90.)

Market actors cannot keep up with states and spouse-driven sponsorships due to the diminishing marginal utility of their investments. Nevertheless, those sponsorship deals have their risks as well. As there is no sufficient return for their investments, the cooperations are fragile, highly dependent on political and personal relations. Recently, after the political turmoil in Kazakhstan, Team Astana has been in a tough situation, as government funds for the team ceased to arrive. (Cyclingnews [2018]) The situation has been resolved since, although the damages are irreparable as race days were skipped and the season-long performance model of the riders was interrupted.

All in all, most of today’s professional road cycling teams are at least partly dependent on their national governments and/or wealthy hobby cyclists. This makes cycling sponsorship uneconomical and causes financial unpredictable.

IV.2.4. Credibility
Recently professional cycling was in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons. Scandal after scandal caused many of the major supporters of the sport to resign from their
sponsorships. Most of the cases were connected to doping, however technological fraud and racing scams made headlines as well.

**Doping**

The usage of performance enhancements drug is as old as professional sports are. In cycling it could be dated back to the 1930s when the first proven cases were registered. However, it only started to have rather grave consequences after the 1998 “Festina-scandal” when a complete team was forced to withdraw from the Tour de France. Previously I mentioned Germany as a “black hole of pro cycling” where the sums spent on the sport is one of the lowest compared to GDP. The reason behind is the 2007 “Operacion Puerto” scandal which shed light on the doping practices of many professional soccer and cycling teams and some tennis players as well. Amongst them was Team Telekom and the only German Tour de France winner Jan Ullrich. More recently the confessions of Lance Armstrong and his former teammates shook cycling world. Figure n. below shows the TV audiences of Tour de France in 8 different countries. There are two things to note. Firstly, many Flandrians consider doping as part of this sport, while German public channels stopped broadcasting the Tour after 2012. Secondly, in the US only Lance Armstrong was capable of gathering audience for the biggest cycling event. US audience was peaking in 2005 and 2010, both were supposed to be Armstrong’s last Tour de France. In 2016 the blame was on Russia with the assumption of a state-funded doping programme, which involves basically every Olympic sport discipline. Recently the legacy of Team Sky and its two Tour de France winners was questioned due to a policy of marginal gains and therapeutic use exemptions.
If we scrutinize doping in a practical sense, it becomes obvious that it is impossible to completely eradicate it. The chances of failing a test are low, because the so-called doping doctors are always a step ahead of anti-doping authorities. The explanation for that is once again economic. Doping doctors can profit from increasing sport performance, while anti-doping laboratories cannot take advantage of detecting a ‘positive’ sample.

A possible solution what would deter riders from doping is a pro-cycling pension for clean riders. This idea will be further discussed in the last chapter.

**Technological fraud**

Technological fraud is as old as bike racing. However, in recent years it became more of a hot topic as it was not only concerning minor issues like frame geometry, rider position, weight and material of certain components, but motors built in the seat tubes of bicycles.

Nevertheless, the practice of built-in electric engines is not as common as one would think due to the agenda-setting of cycling media. So far only one professional cyclist got caught with motorized doping. A female cyclocross rider, Femke Van den Driessche. An electric motor was discovered in one of her spare bikes in the 2016 Cyclocross World Championships. The UCI sanctioned her with a 6-year ban from the sport and a fine of 20.000 Swiss francs. (Cyclingweekly[2016]) In amateur races not sanctioned by the UCI, cheating could still have grave consequences. In September 2017 a motor was found in the bicycle of a French veteran rider after a local road race. He got a lifetime ban from the sport by the French Cycling Federation. In addition, he faces charges of ‘Sports fraud’ – taken very seriously by French law – because he won circa 500 Euros in various local amateur competitions admittedly using a bike equipped with a motor. (Cyclingnews [2017]).

Apart from the few existing cases, the use of motorized doping is no threat to the sport as the UCI applies magnetic resonance scanners and heat cameras to detect hidden motors. Also, bikes can be taken apart by the UCI commissaires after any races without warning.

**Racing scams**

As doping and technological fraud, racing scams have a long history in sports. In cycling they have a special place, because pre-arranging some movements and prefixing certain
acts and prizes are part of the sport and are not against the rules. For instance, if someone lets his breakaway companion win an intermediate sprint in exchange for cooperation in setting up a larger time gap is considered normal. However, if someone lets the other win that same sprint for money, it is a racing scam. The problem is that from the outside it looks quite similar: Riders chat and then there is no fight for the sprint.

As of today, the problem is rather present in the lower ranks of the sport, as top-tier teams and athletes are not interested in ‘selling’ the races. As in the lower ranks prize money, rider salaries and sponsors investments are lower and less dependent on results.

IV.2.5. Safety and health issues
Road cycling has a reputation for being a hard and unforgiving sport, one for the hardest men of all. Sadly, this has often resulted in serious injuries and in a few cases even death. Recently Michael Goolaerts of Vérandas Willems-Crelan suffered a cardiac arrest during Paris-Roubaix. The legend of the cycling hero as created by the newspapers in the early 20th century is still alive and cyclists are still expected to perform in all conditions. Latey there has been a lot of discussion about the safety and wellbeing of professional riders. As a result, UCI rules changed, in addition inner safety rules were introduced in certain events and cycling teams.

The first of those rules was the obligatory use of helmets in 2003. (UCI [2003]) At the time, professional riders protested against it, but now a generation of professional riders grew up, who have never started a race without a helmet. Moreover, now there is an agreement amongst cycling media, that they do not publish any pictures of someone riding without a helmet, be it a pro or a recreational cyclist.

In 2008 AIGCP, ACP and the UCI agreed on a minimum wage for professional cyclists. At the time it was 30.000 Euros for a ProTour cyclist (24.000€ for neo-pros), currently it is 36.000€ and 29.370€ respectively. (Cyclingnews [2017]) However there is a higher demand for spots in pro teams than the actual market offer. There are cases, where pro cyclists are practically paying for the opportunity to ride the biggest races rather than getting paid for it. This happens through personal sponsorships and other wacky deals such as making riders pay for hotels and transportation costs. (Stokes [2014])

Fortunately for professional athletes, in 2016 an extreme weather protocol was introduced by the UCI. It requires a meeting amongst organizers, team directors and race doctors to decide whether no action is needed or the race should be modified or even cancelled.
UCI rule 2.2.029 states:

„the compulsory convening of a meeting between the stakeholders (organisation including race doctor and chief of security, riders, teams, President of the Commissaires Panel,) when extreme weather conditions are anticipated prior to the start of a stage”

It is important to note that this rule only applies to WorldTour and .HC races, thus it does not protect women (not even women’s WorldTour) and men riding for continental teams.

V. The Future of road cycling

V.1. The new league
The possibility of establishing a private league based on the business model of the major US sports leagues has occupied the minds of those working in cycling for a long time. Now it is on the verge of becoming reality with the Velon group and Hammer Series, however the process of becoming a globalized, modern sport is in a very early stage. Consequently, the development is fragile and politics can easily throw back cycling into the mid-20th century. That would mean national teams competing against each other in a race calendar where races are overlapping and riders’ programmes are determined upon political interests.

The question is whether teams can unite and extend Velon to a new series where historical events such as the grandtours and the monuments are included with new races outside of Europe. New events could be persuaded easily as their prestige in the future calendar would increase. However, ASO and RCS Sports are sticking to the status quo, which means that the most prestigious events of cycling cannot get involved. As the financial and human capital are mainly in the hands of those to organizer agencies, they can only be fought with brain drain and with an unprecedented coalition between cycling teams. Draining the knowledge capital and the network from those organizing agencies can stop the media empires claiming the rights, however that is highly unlikely to happen any time soon. That might require a boycott of one or more of the major WorldTour events. Such action would probably result in the financial collapse of the lesser-funded WorldTour teams, the very teams who would be most interested in the change intended. Nevertheless, there is a slow process started by Velon, where riders’ individual race data is shared, plus on-board cameras are available for broadcasts as well. The picture below shows It is important to have more data available to satisfy the needs of a more tech-savvy generation. Once again, younger age groups are targeted with Hammer Series, an event
faster and more action-filled than classic road racing. The new series can make up for a significant part of the revenues of participating teams along with sharing data and on-board videos at other events where it is allowed.

By making the races more enjoyable to a wider range of people who are outsiders to the sport, cycling can be more attractive to global sponsors, seeking cheap advertisement opportunities in order to expand onto new markets. That would allow for team managers rejecting ill sponsorship deals made with governments and cycling’s “sugar daddies”.

Moreover, the new league could have its own unified race calendar and its own management completely independent from the UCI and from the International Olympic Committee. It would allow road cycling to adopt to a rather profit-oriented approach. Thus, further branding of the series and its teams is possible further raising the interests of fans and sponsors. Moreover, being more independent from UCI and IOC could mean less scandals as the teams and athletes are more directly controlled with less grey areas in the rules. In addition, a unified race league is not interested in scaring its spectators away, whereas the IOC and the World Anti-Doping Agency seem to be eager to show up “results” when seeking for sports fraud. Cycling sadly became a ‘scape-goat’ in that game.
Furthermore, an independent league could be more interested in protecting their athletes physically and financially as well, thus avoiding scandals of riders losing their health and their fortunes. In a unified league, safety protocols are easier to properly enforce as there is a stronger central rule enforcement. A pension for retired athletes would also be possible. That would be of course only given to those meeting certain requirements. These would include criteria like 10 years spent racing as a professional without any involvement in sports fraud.

V.2. Continental teams based on national sponsors and hobby supporters
As regards road cycling’s semi-professional level, now called continental level my suggestion is making it the place for development teams and directing governments and wealthy individuals to fund it. As the pro league would soon exclude those less interested in profit, the sport’s lower division would provide them an opportunity to show themselves and invest into the future stars of cycling. Given that smaller races and teams would not be able to compete with a new professional league, they would profit from those sponsorship deals.

V.3. Conclusion
At the end of the research I can draw the following conclusions regarding my hypothesis.

International relations always have a profound effect on professional road cycling, as it is a sport historically built on the idea of nations and there is a constant intention for using its symbols. Such a symbol is the Giro d’Italia start in Jerusalem.

Moreover, as international relations are present in cycling, the sport now is clearly on its way to become globalized. Although I found that Latin-America and Africa are somewhat slower to join professional road cycling. That finding is still in coherence with the idea that economic and political power are essential in the growth of this sport.

Nevertheless, I could not find any evidence for the suggestion that events in international politics and economy need an ever-shorter time to present themselves in the sport. The effect of historical and socioeconomic context is more important in that sense. When the usage of symbols is more emphasized, professional road cycling quickly reacts to global events. Such was the case in the war-torn Spain of Franco, as the Vuelta a Espana kept running during World War II. However, when the symbolic use of sports is not a priority, it can take years for cycling to follow changes of directions in international politics. A prime example of that is the structural reform of the UCI and the dismantle of the separate
unions for amateur and professional cycling, which took place years after the end of cold war. FIAC and FICP only disbanded in 1993, thus allowing for the first professional Olympic road race to happen in 1996.

The very same disability of any quick reaction is still typical of cycling’s main governing body, the UCI. Researching whether cycling sponsorship today is sustainable I found out that the UCI cannot regulate and protect professional road cycling from higher interests. Because of that, the sport is developing very slowly due to ill sponsorship models. The reason behind is the almost unrestricted power of race organizing agencies (owned by giant media empires) and that of certain states and wealthy individuals. I found that a new league partly based on the business model of American Sports Leagues would be a viable solution towards sustainable development. This has already been stated by many and the change has begun. However, as road cycling is a really conservative sport and on the short-term each of its actors is interested in maintaining the status quo, the development process is very slow.
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Összefoglaló:
A Professzionális Országúti Kerékpársport Globalizációja

I. Bevezetés, hipotézis
Az országúti kerékpársport szorosan kötődik Nyugat-Európához, ezen belül is 5 országhoz. Mára mindazonáltal a nemzetközi politikai és gazdasági viszonyoknak megfelelően a kerékpársport is elindult a globalizáció útján. A szakdolgozat célja a profi országúti kerékpársport vizsgálata a nemzetközi kapcsolatok, különbső történelmi és -gazdasági korszakok, események fényében. Vizsgálja, hogy az országúti kerékpársportban milyen mértékben képződnek le a nemzetközi politika egyes változásai. Napjaink globalizálódó világában a növekvő interkonnektivitás miatt az egyes események gyorsabban fejítik ki hatásukat. Jelen szakdolgozat azt is próbálja vizsgálni, hogy az egyes politikai események gyorsabban változnak-e ki rendszerszintű változásokat a sportban az idő előrehaladtával. A profi országúti kerékpársport gazdaságát górcső alá véve pedig próbáltam választ találni a kérdésre, hogy fenntartható-e az jelen formájában vagy pedig zsákutcába jutott a fejlődése. A módszertan alapvetően másodlagos források, könyvek, szakcikkek elemzéséből áll, azonban a szakirodalom szűkös volta egyértelműen szükségessé teszi az elsődleges forrásokból való epítkezést is.

II. Történeti áttekintés, a fontosabb történelmi események hatása a kerékpársportra
Annak érdekében, hogy megértük a sportág jelenét, először a múltat kell górcső alá vetnünk. Az országúti kerékpársport strukturális jelenléti, illetve kihívásai mind a 20. század elejére nyúlnak vissza. Az országúti kerékpársport strukturális jellemzői, illetve kihívásai mind a 20. század elejére nyúlnak vissza.

II.1. Korai professzionálizáció
II.2. Az I. Világháború


II.3. Az 1929-es gazdasági válság

A “Nagy Depresszió” miatt tovább csökkentek mind a versenyek pénzdíjai, mind a kerékpáros csapatok költségvetései. A néhány még működő kerékpárgyártó cég kartellt hozott létre, hogy alacsonyan tartsák a versenyzői fizetéseket, illetve hogy előzetesen megállapodjanak a versenyei eredményeiről. Ennek, illetve a felerősödő populistalista nacionalista hangoknak köszönhetően több versenyre – így a Tour de France-ra is nemzeti válogatottakat hivtak meg a szervezők. Mindezek ellenére, a technikai fejlődésnek, az élő rádiós közvetítéseknek, illetve a rövid filmfelvételeknek köszönhetően növekedett a sport népszerűsége és a kerékpárporton kívüli nagy cégek (pl. Nivea) is beszálltak a csapatok szponzorálásába.

II.4. A II. Világháború


A háborút követően az egyes államok szimbolikusan az újonnan szerzett területeken rendeztek versenyeket.

II.5. Hidegháború
Az 1948 és 1990 közti időszakot az egyetemes történírásban a hidegháború, illetve annak tömblogikája jellemezte. Nem volt ez másképp a profi országúti kerékpársportban sem, bár profi sport a szocialista tömbben nem létezhetett.


Ahogy a többi sport, a kerékpár is fontos részét képezte a szocialista propagandának. Ebben 4 ország járt az élen: NDK, Szovjetunió, Lengyelország és Csehszlovákia. Ezen államok 1956 és 1988 közt a megszerezhető érmek harmadát gyűjtötték be országúti és pályakerékpárh.

II.6. Az országúti kerékpársport a posztbipoláris világrendben

A hidegháborút követő politikai átrendeződés jelentős hatással bírt a kerékpársportra is. 1993-ban megszűntek a különálló amatőr (FIAC) és profi (FICP) nemzetközi szövetségek és újra a UCI lett a sportág egyetlen átfogó nemzetközi szervezete. A volt szocialista blokk országok kerékpársportja napjainkig függő maradt az állami támogatásoktól, de egyre több versenyző képes elérni a nyugat-európai versenyek színvonalát.

III. Globalizáció

A fejezet a profi országúti kerékpársport globalizálódását mutatja be, az egyes világrégiók szemügyre vételével.

III.1. A nyugat-európai félperiféria

Megfigyelhető, hogy az országúti kerékpársport magterülete jelentős részben egybeesik Európa gazdasági szempontból legfejlettebb területével, az úgynevezett „kék banán”-ral. Annak oka, hogy az Egyesült Királyság, illetve Németország mégis félperifériás helyzetbe kerültek a kerékpársport tekintetében, a nemzetközi kapcsolatokban rejlik az oka. Az angolokra jellemző „fényes elkülönüléssel” összeefüggésbe hozható, hogy az új francia hóbort, az országúti kerékpárvihar versenyzés az 1890-es évektől egészen az 1950-es évek elejéig tilos volt a szigetországban. A német kerékpársport a franciákkal való ellentét, majd pedig a háborús vereségek nyomán maradt vissza, ám később az NSZK és NDK szimbolikus vetélkedésén keresztül a világ elmezőnyébe került.

III.2. Az Egyesült Államok – Inga az izolacionizmus és intervencionizmus között

III.3. Ausztrália – Meghatározó erő, Európától elkülönülve
Az ausztrál országúti kerékpársport lényegében egyidős a nyugat-európai magyarságokéval. Az egyetlen jelentős különbség a nemzetek közti vetélkedés hiánya volt. A technikai fejlődésnek és a globalizációknak köszönhetően mára egy kettős rendszer alakult ki a kontinensen. Az Európában versenyző élvonalbeli profil nyáron, míg a kontinentális szintű atléták télen igyeksznek legjobbjukat nyújtani óceáni eseményeken.

III.4. Kelet-Európa és a kommunizmus elhúzódó hatása
A Kelet-Európai térség a 20. század első felében elsősorban Németországhoz kötődött gazdaságilag. Így volt ez a kerékpársportban is, ahol a pályakerékpározás és a motorvezetések – úgynevezett „stéherversenyek” - kerültek főszerepe. Ezt követően a hidegháború alatt a szocialista blokkban a már említett amatőr országúti kerékpársport volt a meghatározó. Az 1990-es évektől a sportág ezekben az országokban nem vagy csak részben sikerült az állami segítségtől függetleníteni.

III.5. Oroszország és a posztsovjet térség
Ezt a térséget - hasonlóan Kelet-Európához – érzékenyen érintette a nemzetközi rend átalakulása. Ezen államok a „nyugat” és Oroszország közti befolyási övezet határára kerültek. Ahol a profi országúti kerékpársport fennmaradt, (Kazahsztán, Azerbajdzsán) ott az a piaci alapokat nélkülöző, hosszútávon nem fenntartható állami támogatásokon alapszik.

III.6. Latin-Amerika
A Spanyolországgal való kapcsolat lévén, a megfelelő minőségű országutak megépülését követően azonnal elkezdett felépülni a sportág ezen országokban, különös tekintettel Kolumbiára, ahol 1951-ben már megrendezték a Vuelta a Colombia-t. A magaslati körülményeknek köszönhetően a fizikailag legalakalmassabb versenyzők ebben a régióban születnek, azonban magántőke hiányában ez a tehetség jórészt kiaknázatlanul marad. Az
egyetlen profi csapat - a Colombia-Coldeportes – a Kolumbiai Sportminisztérium további finanszírozása híján 2014-ben megszűnt.

III.7. Távol-Kelet
A legnagyobb kerékpár- és alkatrészgyártók már a Távol-Keletre helyezték termelésük nagyobb részét. Továbbá olyan gyártók is vannak (Shimano, Merida), melyek főhadiszállása is Ázsiában található. Ennek köszönhetően a gazdasági nyomás a keleti nyitásra egyre nő a profi országúti kerékpársportban. A szponzori támogatásoknak köszönhetően már egyre gyakrabban tűnnek fel ázsiai versenyzők WorldTour csapatokban, illetve Kínában már rendeznek WorldTour versenyt is. Ezen felül a kínai Wanda Group már ajánlatot tett mind az RCS Sport, mind pedig az ASO európai szervezőirodák felvásárlására.

III.8. Közel-Kelet
A Távol-Kelethez hasonlóan a Közel-Kelet államai is igyeksznek anyagi tőkéjükkel betölni a profi országúti kerékpársport világába. Ez WorldTour versenyek szervezése terén sikeresnek is tűnt, ám a Katari Körverseny megszűnése fenntarthatósági problémákat vet fel. Ott ugyanis a finanszírozás nem piaci alapokon történt, hanem a nyersanyagokból származó bevételből az RCS Sportot kérték fel az esemény lebonyolítására. Profi csapatokat – a helyi középosztály hiányában – szintén csak európai versenyzőkkel voltak képesek létrehozni Bahrein, illetve Abu Dhabi.

III.9. Afrika
Afrika a legelmaradtabb kontinens, az egyetlen melynek még nem sikerült a globális kerékpárspor vérkeringésébe bekapcsolódnia. Ez alól kivételt képeznek a dél-afrikai Dimension Data csapata, ahol néhány helyi születésű is versenyzik, illetve a UCI World Cycling Centre programja. Utóbbi keretein belül a nemzetközi szövetség svájci központjában készülhetnek a világ minden tájáról érkező, tehetséges fiatalok.

IV. A profi országúti kerékpársport gazdasága
A történeti és helyi sajátosságokat követően ez az fejezet mutatja be a kerékpársport jelenét, annak gazdasági jellemzőin keresztül.

IV.1. Főbb szereplők
IV.1.1. Versenyszervezők
A profi országúti kerékpársport jelenleg legnagyobb hatalommal bíró szereplői a versenyszervezők. Közülük is kiemelkednek az ASO és az RCS Sport. Ez a kettő szervezőiroda rendezi a legnagyobb presztízzsel bíró háromhete körversenyeket, illetve a legfontosabb öt egynapos versenyből négyet. A versenyeket a UCI négyféle
besorolással illeti, a WorldTour a legmagasabb szint, míg a .2 a legalacsonyabb. Fontos azonban leszögezni, hogy az egyes szinteken belül is óriási presztízs belélyen vannak, így állhat az előbb említett nyolc verseny az összes többi felett. A szervezők rendelkeznek a legnagyobb gazdasági- és kapcsolati tőkével is. Előbbit a közvetítési jogokra fenntartott monopoliumuknak köszönhetik.

IV.2. Csapatok és szponzorok

IV.3. Versenyzők
Az országúti kerékpársport központi szereplői sok szempontból a leggyengébbek is. Sokáig teljesen ki voltak szolgáltatva alkalmazóiknak, illetve a versenyszervezőknek. Az 1999-ben megalakult Profi Kerékpárosok Szervezete (ACP) azonban már több ügyben is sikeresen juttatta érvényre az atléták érdekeit. Az azóta eltelt időszakban az első, illetve második divízióban bevezetésre kerültek bérmínimumok, illetve szélsőséges időjárás alapján alkalmazandó protokoll.

IV.2. Kihívások
Az országúti kerékpársport hosszú története, nyugat-európai magja, illetve a versenyszervezők hatalma miatt rendkívül konzervatív sport. Ez közgazdasági, különösképpen fenntarthatósági anomáliákat idéz elő. A következőkben a legégetőbb kihívások következnek.

IV.2.1. Egységes, átlátható versenynaptár
A laikus néző számára az országúti kerékpározás legnehezebben érthető eleme az elméletileg egyenrangú WorldTour versenyek közti presztízsbeli különbség. Míg más sportágakban a versenyzők minden világkupa futamra ellátogatnak, hogy egy végső elszámolásnál a lehető legjobb eredményt érjék el, a UCI WorldTour 2018-as versenynaptára 37 versenyt és 167 versenynapot tartalmaz, Afrika kivételével a világ minden szegletére ellátogatva. Előfordul, hogy egyazon időben egyszerre két többnapos esemény zajlik különböző kontinenseken. Az, hogy létrejöhessen egy egységes sorozat,
melynek minden állomásán ott vannak a világ legjobb országúti kerékpárosai jelentős kompromisszumokat igényel a rendezők részéről.

IV.2.2. Finanszírozás, a bevételek elosztása
Az sportág jelenlegi bevételeinek nagyrésze a versenyszervezőket illeti. A versenyek közvetítési, illetve névhasználati joga is a szervezőket illeti. Mi több az ASO már egyes kultikussá vált földrajzi elnevezéseket (Alpe d’Huez) is magának követel. A klubcsapatok így nehéz helyzetben vannak, szinté kizárólag a nélvadó szponzorok által adott támogatásból kell fenntartaniuk az alakulatokat.

IV.2.3. Állami és hobbisponszorációs modellek

IV.2.4. Hiteles kerékpársport
A tiszta verseny nem kizárólag a sportág üzleti, hanem a szakmai oldalán is rendszeresen sérül.

Visszatérô problémát jelentenek a sorozatos dopingbotrányok. Ezekre a különbözô piacok jelentős különbséggel reagálnak, míg Flandriában nem változott a kerékpársport népszerűsége, addig Németországban a közmédia felhagyott a versenyek közvetítésével. Mivel a tiltott teljesítményfokozók és fedôszerek fejlesztése hatalmas profittal kecsket, szemben a dopingellenôrők munkájával, a tiszta sport kizárólag visszamenôleges tesztekkel, illetve sportolói életpályamodelllel érhetô el.

A mechanikai doping, avagy az apró motorok elhelyezése a kerékpárban egészen újkori jelenség, melyre a UCI hőkamerás tesztek, illetve mágneses rezonancia szkennerek bevezetésével válaszolt. A profi országúti mezônybôl a mai napig senki nem
Az eredmény előzetes befolyásolásának két fajtáját lehet megkülönböztetni. Az első esetben a versenyzők különböző díjak elnyerésében érdekeltek (például összetett verseny és szakaszeredmény), ezáltal előre megegyeznek az együttműködésben. Az első eset nem ellenkezik a szabályokkal. Az második esetben a csere egyik oldalán anyagiak állnak, tehát az egyik fél megvesztegeti a másikat, hogy „eladja” a versenyt. A profi sportban a fizetéseket kiegészítő prémiumok, illetve a médiajelenlét miatt ez a jelenség mára szinte eltűnt, félprofi, illetve amatőr szinten viszont egyre inkább teret nyer.

IV.2.5. A versenyzők biztonsága és jóléte

Ahogy a korábbiakban már említésre került, a versenyzők biztonsága érdekében több szabálymódosítás is bevezetésre került a 2000-es években. Ezek közül a legfontosabbak a bukósisak kötelező viselése, illetve az extrém időjárást szabályozó protokoll bevezetése. A versenyzők jóléte érdekében meghatározásra kerültek bérminimumok, azonban ezek könnyen kijátszhatók szponzori szerződések keretében. A profi kerékpáros „nyugdíj” igénye már felmerült, de megvalósítása még várható magára.

V. A profi országúti kerékpársport jövője

V.1. Az új liga

Az előző fejezetben felsorolt problémák többségére megoldást jelenthet egy az amerikai profi ligákhoz hasonlóan működő üzleti alapokon nyugvó versenysorozat létrehozása, ahol a bevételből a klubok és az atléták (bizonyos mértékig) is közvetlenül részesülnek. Az új versenysorosztok mellett a közvetítés minősége is javulhat, a nézők több információt kaphatnak például egyes kerékpárosok teljesítményéről.

V.2. Kontinentális szint

A Continental divízióban versenyző csapatok maradhatnának a UCI irányítása alatt, az állami- és hobby szponzorok általi finanszírozás így kívánatos, hiszen a félprofi kerékpársport viszonylag kis érdekölődést generál.

V.3. Konklúzió

A tanulmány végén több következtetés vonható le.

A nemzetközi politikai viszonyokban a sport, így a kerékpársport is szimbolikus jelentéssel bír.

Az előbbi okból az országúti kerékpársport sem maradhat ki a globalizációból. Afrika és Latin-Amerika gyengébb kapcsolata a szakággal a csekély globális érdekkérvényesítő készség következménye.
A nemzetközi politikában bekövetkező változások és azok országúti kerékpárban való leképződése közt eltelt idő nem csökken egyértelműen, az kontextusfüggő.

A sportágban jelenleg fennálló üzleti modell nem fenntartható a versenyszervezők túlsúlya, illetve a csapatok közti versenyt torzító állami- és hobbitámogatók miatt.