

**PREDRAG MANOJLOVIĆ - NATIONAL MISSION OF A SPORTS VISIONARY -  
CONTRIBUTION TO MANAGEMENT OF OLYMPIC DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract**

In the period from 2001 to 2009, a conscious effort was taken in Serbia on many occasions aimed at determining the ways of development of as many factors of the national sports system (NSS) and its associated environment as possible. The term "national mission of a sports visionary" in the title of this editorial indicates that the changes occurred thanks to the individual person. Using ex-post consideration of available material and through inductive reasoning, while striving to realize the vision of Predrag Manojlović, a scholar of progress and development in this field, the paper aimed at reaching conclusions about the professional and scientific foundation of changes in the NSS and the National Olympic Committee (NOC). In order to avoid a subjective approach to inferencing, the analyzed documents were compared with the results presented in periodicals of the same period in terms of their meaning, terminology, timeliness, action plans, etc. The results of this qualitative analysis should also be understood as a contribution to Olympic studies, namely to the subfield of thereof - Management of Olympic Development. While reflecting on Manojlović's work, numerous examples of good practice models have been identified, which, through analysis of their wider meaning, have been classified into clusters of an innovative approach to sports organization and management: (1) NOC and its development, (2) an Athlete, (3) NSS and its development, (4) Sports coach, (5) Sponsors and donors, (6) the Republic of Serbia, (7) the Society of the Republic of Serbia, (8) Human resources for sports of the 21st century, (9) Multisport competitions, (10) Olympic studies and competencies of a leader of Olympic development, (11) International cooperation and the agenda of sports developments in Europe. The singularity of Manojlović, as a leader, stems from his open-mindedness. As a leader of Olympic development, his qualities were especially spirituality, morality, education, intelligence, comradery. He was dedicated to his task and aspired for achieving excellence, he was also brave, innovative, resolute, fair, discerning, reasonable, and principled. In the area of his work, Predrag Manojlović was "Aretes" – a true Olympian, an exceptional man, and his achievements in the field of sports stand out in many ways.

**Keywords:** PREDRAG MANOJLOVIĆ / LEADERSHIP / OLYMPIC STUDIES / OLYMPIC DEVELOPMENT / NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE / ENGSO/ SERBIA

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## THE VISIONARY OF THE NATIONAL SPORTS SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

In the period from 2001 to 2009, Serbia, numerous, conscious effort were undertaken aimed firstly at identifying problems, and then, for the benefit of direct users (athletes, exercisers, students, citizens), at determining the directions of development of as many factors of the national sports system (NSS) and its associated environment as possible. The activities that paved the way for the changes began with the recognition of the obsolescence of the existing organizational scheme of management and efficiency of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as recognizing the conservatism of NSS officials concerning ongoing and envisioned changes. Due to this particular aspect of NSS as such, while the changes in the organization of sport were in the planning phase, a great number of objective and subjective challenges that arose following the social changes in Serbia in October 2000 had to be taken into consideration. The goal of the planned changes was to reach a complete, sports-oriented, consistent, autonomous, modern and stable NSS (Jevtić, 2019). Today, two decades later, at least three facts are indisputable, the first that the changes did take place, the second, that they did not arise at the intention of the NSS for further improvement and development, and the third, the changes were not induced under the influence of external actors in the NSS environment, so, given that sport, in that historical period, was outside the agenda of social changes, and as a result, it remained out of general perspective and was less influenced by politics, media, and the economy. The question arises how the changes, which directly affected the development of the NSS, have occurred?

Numerous planned and implemented activities that accompany the changes in the sports system in Serbia are rooted in the "vision of sports enthusiasts and forward-thinking scholars" (Vukašinović, 2018). With regard to the period analyzed by Vukašinović, a century later, the meaning of the term "national mission of sports visionaries" from the title of this editorial indicates that progressive tendencies are necessary for Serbia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and that they are an integral part of development of NSS and sports organization.

Predrag Manojlović (1951-2014), an Olympian and leader in the field of sports at the national and European level, advocated for the prosperity and progress of the NSS. The changes he initiated were undertaken through the development of the National Olympic Committee (NOC)<sup>1</sup> and through the development of the NSS and its environment (society, media, sponsors, etc.). These changes resulted from the efforts of Manojlović, who managed to merge and operationalize his experience in sports (winner of a silver Olympic medal at the Olympics in Moscow, 1980, as a member of the water polo team of SFRY) and in the economy with his knowledge of sports organization. An analysis of his professional biography shows that his ability of planning and managing of the development of the NOC, and then the NSS, was established on the synergy of his academic achievements (bachelor of economy, master of management in sport) with business and political skills that he acquired through economy and politics. A particular connection can be observed between his liberal affinity towards changes and the dynamics of the NOC towards introducing and mastering new business tendencies. Facts, such as the "poor organization of the NSS", the absence of leadership, financial insolvency, the inactivity of the authorities of the sports system, as well as many other unknowns in terms of the development of sports and Serbian society at the beginning of the 21st century, are the result of the present situation in sport (Jevtić 2006, 2011). Steps towards the "recovery" of the NSS required prior homogenization of all actors in the sports

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<sup>1</sup> For nine years Manojlović was Secretary General, firstly of the Yugoslav Olympic Committee - YOC (2001-2003), then of the Olympic Committee of Serbia and Montenegro - OCSMNE (until 2006) and, finally, of the Olympic Committee of Serbia - OCS (2006-2009). Due to the dynamic state-legal discontinuity, it is appropriate herein to use the term National Olympic Committee (NOC).

organization. Thus, it was necessary for the one who initiates and manages the changes to be pro-Olympic oriented regarding their value system, rational while taking action, wise in the choice of means and methods, confident while taking forward steps, measured in planning, to be collected and able to influence the NSS actors and their associates towards pursuing shared aspirations for unity, development and future progress. Therefore, the basic precondition for the change of the current situation and further development to take place was the homogenization of the actors in the NSS, which happened at that given moment through the Sports Association of Serbia (SAS)<sup>2</sup>. The National Pro-Olympic Sports Organizations (NSOs) and the NOC have integrated. Another important step - a precondition for the changes to take place was the reform of the NOC from then small to medium-sized, respectable, socially and culturally recognizable leading national sports organization<sup>3</sup>, endorsed by the actors from the world of sports and society.

Perseverance in implementing the changes that Manojlović insisted on, first by directing the activities of the NOC, and later of the NSS, can be presented by "AGIL's scheme"<sup>4</sup> of Parson's theories of action and developing of social systems" (Brdar, 2007). Manojlović's first step, seen through the AGIL scheme, led to the programmatic and effective harmonization of the NOC with the environment, which can be expressed by the term from the field of economy, or nowadays more often, IT- "merging" (expansion, connection). The agent of merging in the case of registration of SAS was the NOC who offered the NSO to join sports and social status of their respective organizations to form a large national sports organization (G) which would eventuate joint management of pro-Olympic sports (I). Unlike merging in the field of economy or informatics, in Serbian sports, the focus of these processes was the Serbian sports - Olympic identity and tradition, as well as the unequivocal and urgent need for the development of all pro-Olympic sports factors (L). Manojlović was the only one who recognized the challenges that the sports organizations NSS and NOC will face following the changes the state-legal and international identity of Serbia has undergone. Therefore, the founding and short existence of the SAS (2005-2006) should be considered as a wise and suitable development, but also as an innovation that created a systemic prerequisite for the autonomous development of pro-Olympic sports advocated by the NOC and the NSO. The formation of the Sports Association of Serbia, which assigned the NOC with the role of leading authority of changes in (re)organization of sports, can be considered an initial step towards the integration of the NSS in terms of pro-Olympic sports. No less important contribution of the SAS is the liberation from chronic meddling of other constituents of the sports system of the times in the management and program and development agenda of the NOC. This primarily refers to the Sports Federation of Serbia (Territorial Sports Association) and its attempts at assuming formal and informal leadership over the entire sports system and the NOC itself.

The documents, as well as an accompanying list of planned and implemented activities from the NOC archives, show that the development of the NOC itself, as well as the whole NSS - pro-Olympic sports, in the period 2001-2009, was intrinsically shaped by Manojlović, and that it was guided, directed and operationally realized through three time-overlapping phases:

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<sup>2</sup> The NSO was supposed to find solutions to current sports issues such as: releasing sports from influence and management of political parties (parties prior to the October changes, as well as from the so-called crisis headquarters which in terms of sports were established immediately after the social changes of October 2000), democratization and integration of pro-Olympic sport in the function of national development and international recognition and prestige.

<sup>3</sup> One of the ways was by introducing the modern sports, social and Olympic vision of the OCS into the Serbian Olympic Club, as an organization with national, sports, cultural and legacy of social development (founded in 1912).

<sup>4</sup> English: (A) adaptation - adaptation, harmonization with the environment; (G) goal setting - setting goals, (I) integration - preserving internal order and (L) latency - respecting normative models and value patterns.

- I. Business self-determination and self-direction (self-education and training through the MEMOS program<sup>5</sup>, congresses, seminars, workshops, etc. of the international Olympic environment, the Olympic Games, and other competitions under the competence of the NOC), transpiring circa 2000-2003. An inseparable part of this phase is education within the sports organization - NOC, which took place during the entire period of Manojlović's term as Secretary-General (2000-2009).
- II. New information, skills, science and technology of sports, working methods, strengthening of human resources, organizational levels of the NOC<sup>6</sup> and division of responsibilities - "co-management" with the NOC (through the SAS), approximately 2001-2006.
- III. Hierarchy of management of sports in Serbia, at the very "virtual top" of which was the NOC, then already the Olympic Committee of Serbia (OCS) and the Sports Federation of Serbia, as a territorial organization. Mediators in the engagement of national sports in the realization of Manojlović's vision are the Olympic programs (Jevtić, 2012, 2014, 2019) and accompanying strategic and operational documents. This phase lasted from 2006 to 2009, more precisely until the political majority was established (overturn at the Regular Assembly for the election of the leadership of the OCS for the Olympic cycle 2009-2012) over the normative and value attributes of national sports and national Olympic organization (political interventionism).

After these three, the ongoing first period of the fourth phase has begun, during which we observe the actual, rather than implicit management of sports on the part of the State and political factors, who, using the combination of neoliberalism, interventionism, structuralism, and participacy, with pronounced patrimonialism, emulate the leadership over the NSS (state interventionism, refer to Jevtić, 2019).

### **A VISIONARY IN THE TIME OF A NEGLECTED SPORTS ORGANIZING**

The tendency towards development and changes in the sports organization, in the majority of international sports systems, contains elements of professionalization of NSOs and SOs. The said tendency has been present since the end of the Los Angeles Olympics (1984), with significant intensification occurring after the Olympics in Barcelona (1992). The changes were predominantly directed towards NSOs, including NOCs (Winand, Vos, Zintz, Scheerder, 2013). The changes were less present in amateur sports clubs. The challenges of professionalization have made the impression that national and elementary sports organizations (sports clubs) - (N)SOs need to establish new management structures and programs to do their job more efficiently and to adequately meet the expectations of athletes and the environment (Winand & Anagnostopoulos, 2017). These processes are accompanied by new knowledge and skills acquired by professional staff, especially in determining the scope of strategic development and the implementation of program agendas. These and similar, evolutionary changes at the level of national sports were preceded by the professionalization of international sports organizations led by the IOC (Nagel, Schlesinger, Bayle & Giaouque, 2015). Throughout this discussion it is important to note that for any changes to take place it was necessary to provide staff with a higher level of education, i.e. to recruit those who have specialized professional training and thus reputable business resumes, as well as to put at the head a "brave leader" able to multilaterally and thoroughly assess the process of changes (Girginov, 2008).

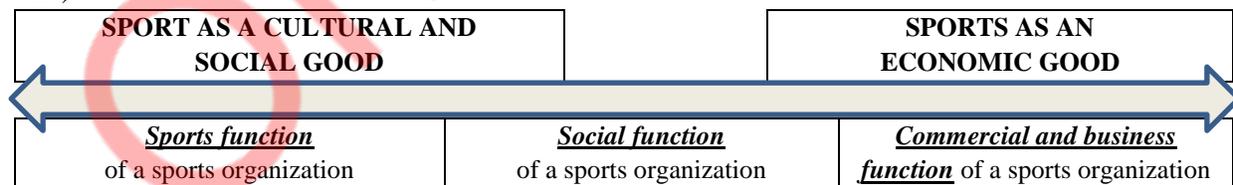
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<sup>5</sup> The MEMOS (Executive Masters in Sport Organizations Management) (see more at <https://memos.degree>)

<sup>6</sup> The SAS organization within which the process of co-managing the pro-Olympic NSOs took place with the aim of building a comprehensive NSS.

A review of available periodicals from the end of the twentieth and the first decade of the XXI century unequivocally identifies the general agreement of studies on the need to improve the organization and efficiency of the sports organization (Sowa, Selden & Sandfort (2004), Madella, Bayle, & Tome (2005), Bayle & Madella (2002); Wolfe, Hoerber & Babiak, (2002); Papadimitriou & Taylor (2000); Wolfe, Weick, et al. (2005). Accordingly, the professionalization of (N)SOs is referred to as “a process during which the sports organization in general, the system of sports, but also sports-related professions, are transferred from the level of volunteer work to the increasingly emphasized business environment (Zeimers, Lefebvre, Winand, Anagnostopoulos, Zintz, T. & Willem, 2020). Although the studies did not name the actors of the changes, they were predominantly identified from the inner (micro) and middle (meso) circle of the field of the sports organization (De Bosscher, Bingham, Shibil, van Bottenburg, De Knop, 2008), which in the case of Serbia implies individuals from sports clubs to NSO and NOC.

The situation in the Serbian NSOs, including the NOC, at the onset of the changes (late 2000) does not correspond to pan-European initiatives and the vision for sports at the beginning of the 21st century. According to the vision for the development of sport, the field of higher education, the labor market, science in sports, sports-medical protection of athletes, anti-doping measures, social and health issues of athletes, and the like have not been adjusted according to the needs that arose in the new millennium. This situation was also caused by the fact that the academic community only sporadically acknowledged and dealt with issues of sports, and when it did, sport was most often considered as an experimental field of study in pursuing one’s personal development and self-promotion, that is, in Serbia, academic community acted differently from the scientific community “which sees and respects sports in terms of its identity and goals” (Jeu, During 1994). In other words, at the very onset of the changes, it was evident that higher education and science were the missing links perfected and raised by many other national sports systems to a much better level. Higher education (teaching, science, social mission) has developed its own educational and scientific curricula, which has changed the standard assumptions of the sports organization, both in terms of learning and management and with regard to matters of participation, training, competition, society, and business (Scheme 1). The first steps towards changes in Serbia were observed in 2002-2003 at the Faculty of Sports and Physical Education of the University of Belgrade. Those changes were of short span and relative range compared to the requirements of the NSS at the time, the expected dynamics of changes it has undergone, and the importance of obtaining results of higher education in the area of human resources and progress (for more refer to Radojević et al. 2019, Jevtić, 2017).



**Scheme 1.** Values and continuum of development of sports function (modified according to Jevtić, 2014, 2019)

**The accomplishment of the vision as a test of the potential of Manojlović's strategy for the development of sports**

The analysis of the ontological continuum of sport (Scheme 1) shows that at its left end, sport as a cultural value is "a national good that contains many special functions important for the development of an individual and society" (Jeu, 1994). Underdeveloped or poor management of the sports system from the period of socialist rule in Serbia did not sufficiently recognize the importance of sports in terms of its

social values, and therefore the evaluation of the social function of sports was omitted. The particularities and autonomy of sports, educational, and overall social significance of sports and its essential volunteer nature were also not recognized and respected (Radojević, Jevtić, 2011). At the other end of the continuum, seen as the starting point of sports organization at the beginning of the new millennium, sport is given as a generated sustainable business environment with all the benefits directed towards its users. Within the sports system of Serbia at the beginning of the new millennium, it was possible to link these two ends of the continuum only in theory. In periodicals, national programs were presented as an imperative agenda of sport for the new age (Chaker, 2004). Whether by following this standpoint, or through independent thinking, Manojlović and his team opted for national programs as an opportunistic program-development solution, but also as a means by which it is possible to pursue the vision of sports in the new millennium through joining the ends of the ontological continuum of sports. Thus were adopted the Olympic programs (OP), which materialized the content of the NSS change process, enriched it by introducing various occupations and professions, and promptly responded to the specific needs and expectations of athletes. Manojlović rightly believed that through the professionalization and strengthening of the business function of the NOC and NSO, the neglected cultural values would be reinvigorated and the social function of sports would be affirmed. This particular kind of dualism of causality was resolved by introducing numerous programs through which the NOC and NSS, as well as the Serbian society itself<sup>7</sup>, have undergone development. The analysis of the meaning of the program units initiated and realized by Manojlović speaks in favor of this claim about the scope and singularity of the developmental step forward and his indisputably visionary mind. To summarize, based on the available documents, this ex-post analysis singled out the areas of activity of Manojlović and his team (Scheme 2), most of which are outside the scope of competence of the usual NOC or even the National Olympic Committee which stands at the hierarchical top of the management of the national sports system (Scheme 2).



**Scheme 2.** Program activities and joining the ends of the ontological continuum of sports development in the idea devised by Predrag Manojlović

<sup>7</sup> Specifically, programs such as: Revitalization of the Republic Institute for Sports as a reference institution for sports medicine, sports analytics and sports psychology; Supplemental provision of the Republic and Provincial Institute for Sports; Children's sports programs, OKSIS - sports information system of Serbia, Administration in sports, Culture and sports, Women and sports, Creating an environment for physical education, Olympic values, European non-governmental sports organization, Olympic programs, Ecology, Sports and media, Historical heritage, Museum of Sports, Olympic Education, EYOF in Belgrade (2007), etc.

Numerous areas of action shown in Scheme 2 indicate that the NOC (today the OCS), as an organization, has become innovative, that the intentions that led toward the "new product" have changed it at the program, managerial, as well as at the organizational and value level. Changes in the philosophy of sports concerning the society of Serbia remain its permanent legacy and result of its activity. The imperative social function of sport has been validated.

To meet the expectations of athletes, the first NOC priority, followed by the NSO of pro-Olympic sports, was a vision: "athlete (exerciser) in the focus", which integrates the entire national sport on the postulates of "inspiring and building a person through sport" (Durantez et al, 2010). The ideal of "athlete-focused" originates from the spirit of Olympism from the end of the 19th century, but its meaning corresponds with the postmodern vision of sport. Ex-post elaboration of planning documents on the occasion of participation in the Olympics in Athens (Pavlović, 2002) and Beijing (Jevtić, 2006), documents the insistence on this idea, which, seen as a holistic approach to the training of athletes (Olympic preparations - OP), is recognized in all corporate and program documents of the NOC. At the same time, this vision is realized in the NOC personnel outline, while the program is effectively diversified according to the specifics of a particular sport and individual needs of an athlete (according to the needs of building of results, development of training, and competition capacities, lifestyle, freedom, personal values, the orientation of an athlete, etc.). Therefore, the introduction of the idea of "athlete-focused" at the very beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the analysis of definite steps for its realization (the mission) indicate the existence of philosophically organized deliberation and elaborated strategy for humanization of time-limited sports and Olympic careers of athletes. It could be said that this approach as such belongs to one particular "school of thought". In appointing an athlete at the center of the vision of the NOC, Manojlović, as an Olympian, sports enthusiast, and sports worker, was ahead of his time. Namely, at a time when international periodicals sporadically dealt with the now widely accepted term sport-centricity of the sports system, and at a time when the athlete-oriented vision in the practice of other national systems was still in its earliest stages, at the same time in Serbia, Manojlović and his team adjusted the programmatic, financial and normative side of the NOC in their entirety according to the needs of an Olympian athlete (Table 1).

The expression "athlete-focused" was not supposed to give rise to any contradictions between top-level and participant sports, or national and sports at the local level, rather, it is a far-reaching idea of foreseeable and desired developments - a conceptual framework for connecting all levels of the sports organization and achieving excellence in participatory and competitive sports (conceptual, structural and functional integration of NSS). The professional biography of Manojlović speaks of his undivided commitment to all athletes – exercisers visible through his engagement in the national organization "Sport for All" (he was vice president, while, at the same time, this organization had a member of the administrative authority of NOC), and in ENGSO<sup>8</sup> where he planned and implemented a pan-European sports initiative. The members of his team can attest to his sensitivity to all matters regarding athletes. Therefore, it can be concluded that Manojlović regarded sport as a personal and social good, which inspires people toward achieving excellence through physical activity, but also as a planned and program-led training activity to achieve excellence in the most prestigious competitions.

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<sup>8</sup> A European sports NGO hoping to be the leading force of participatory sport in Europe. It cherishes the following values: democracy, equality, inclusion, sustainability, integrity and education (<https://www.engso.eu/organisation>).

**Table 1** Generalization of actions taken by actors in the sports environment towards Olympian athletes of Serbia

Analysis of the influence of the athlete's environment	Family of an athlete	State authorities		Public and corporate enterprises	Factors of the sports system		
		Authorities of units of local self-government	Government and the President of the Republic		Coach	NSO	NOC of SRB
<b>The goal</b>	The development of a family member thanks to sports and success at the Olympics - the status of the family	Support to athletes, advocacy, and affirmation by the authorities of the local community	Support to the national Olympic team, international prestige, visibility and endorsement of the State, love of sports	Image and endorsement by companies through the NOC and the Olympic delegation, socially responsible behavior, etc.	Orientation towards achievement, professional and personal challenge, national awards for coaches, etc. Sports and social status	Affirmation by the NSO; Working towards a top result, promotion with sponsors and international sports organizations	Talent support; Development from personal to top result and its maintenance; The image of the athlete and the Olympic team; Career after sports
<b>Connection with the athlete and their result</b>	Family relations are of primary importance	Ad-hoc, per the availability of the community budget, depends to a large extent on the attitudes of the local community authorities	Restrained interference, from covert to public emphasis on the importance of the State (government and politics) in sports	Economic interests and business improvement, affirmation of responsible social behavior	One-on-one personal relationships are of primary importance	Unpredictable, ad-hoc, controlled, authoritative, budget-characterized but also interest-oriented approach	Methodical, precise, thoughtful, factual, willing to make compromises, etc. Support for excellence in sports, social development, and post-career life
<b>Rules</b>	Personal rules of the family	Rules of the unit of the local community	Laws, informal pressures	Written and formal rules - contracts supported by prizes and limits	Informally and mutually accepted rules	Rules and regulations of the given sport, but also informal and formal rules of the NSO	Value framework: "Athlete in the focus", Olympic programs
<b>Evaluation</b>	Success is a reward for hard work, love, and support. Participation in the Olympics is a family success	Without clear evaluation criteria	Without clear criteria for objective evaluation	Conditional, depending on the results and public visibility of the athletes, the Olympic team and the Olympics	Recognition, encouragement, reward, inspiration	The result of the competition, the cornerstone of budgeting for the upcoming competition, and further activities of the NSO	Personal progress and excellence of the athlete; Results of participation in competitions; The content of the actors with the programs and the mission of OCS, etc.

Placing the athlete - Olympian (individual and team) and their sports, personal, educational, and other needs in the focus of the vision of development, determined the goal of many of the NOC missions which, from the very beginning, required conducting a large number of operations aimed at the athlete, sports system, Serbian society, sponsors, and competitions within the competence of the NOC (Table 1). The number of actions in the activities of the NOC was not conditioned by the number of employees, but by the number of observed challenges, the number of athletes designated for OM (individuals and teams), the specifics of Olympic sports, as well as the number of multisport competitions under the competence

of NOC<sup>9</sup>. A certain idea must be recorded in official reports to be further developed and eventually implemented. In this analysis, the annual reports of the NOC cover two Olympic cycles (2001-2004 and 2005-2008), during which, as a time frame given for the execution of operations, changes were made to the NOC in terms of foundation, organizational and strategic documents, human resources (management, executives, authorities, commissions, employees, and associates), method of work and application of new technologies. Manojlović's pragmatism, openness in addressing all authorities and interested parties, but also a certain degree of spontaneity and his method of "designing changes on the go", eventuated the rapid growth of the NOC into a skilled professional organization capable of implementing the said vision and introducing the new sports reality induced by it. The reports adopted by both the NOC and the partner organizations, including the IOC, show that there were no factual differences between the planned, approved, implemented, evaluated, and adopted documents.

### **A VISIONARY IN THE TIME OF STAGNATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE**

The logic of sports organization, which Manojlović aspired to, was not established in the neoliberal or interventionist context of developments, as observed elsewhere in the world of sports at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. His vision of the outcome of the development of the NOC and NSS skipped the neoliberal intermediate phase of development (the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), whereby Serbian sport, through accomplished consistency with the postmodern perspective of the world (of sport), literally "jumped" into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is important to note that in pursuing his vision of sports development, Manojlović does not shy away from functional structuralism (comprehensive planning, development of society, participation of all levels of authority including management by the State, equality, etc.). During the implementation of the positive factors of functional structuralism, he relied on the scientific results and the competence of highly educated staff. Science and higher education are recognized as a partner and catalyst for change which should result in the training of personnel capable of leading the national sports system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (for more refer to Jevtić, 2006, 2017). However, the analysis of certified higher education curricula in Serbia (see more Radojević, Grbović, Jevtić, 2019) indicates that it does not contain material that, from the professional and scientific point of view, studies the sports system, its organization, development, management, scope, etc., and appraises the skills and competencies of sports managers and leaders. In contrast to societies and countries that deal with this subject more seriously and accordingly implement more progressive processes, in Serbia, the academic community and the sports system as actors in the natural and generic process of acquiring and disseminating knowledge "do not cooperate" (corporate - dual education), which is why the following still manifests today: (a) lack of quality academic study programs aimed at sports organization, management, leadership, entrepreneurship, etc. (b) lagging behind in the adoption of new theories, methods, and introducing new technologies, industry, methodology, philosophy, etc., disciplines and areas of the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary context of science and sports practices.

The lack of scientific curiosity about the room for the development of the NSS and sports organizing is not the only unpleasant surprise that Manojlović has encountered during the ongoing process of development of the sports system. The same is noticeable in other areas of knowledge important for the notion of sports, the athlete, and the occupation of a sports coach. Therefore, the

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<sup>9</sup> Summer Olympics - SOG, Winter Olympics - WOG, Summer and Winter Youth Olympic Games - YOG, European Games, European Youth Olympic Festival - EYOF, Mediterranean Games - MG.

indolence present in the ranks of the academic community of Serbia<sup>10</sup> can certainly be considered the new-third *modus operandi* of some scientists and institutions related to sports and physical culture. The first two are modesty and lack of judgment (Jeu, During 1994).

The indolence of the academic community of Serbia, as well as that of a large number of scientists and institutions associated with the culture of sports and physical activity, was evident to a significant extent, primarily in the shaping of the identity and goals of national sports and Serbian society. This has resulted in: (a) a continuous non-recognition of higher education degrees by employers (in sports), and (b) scant recognition of academic levels and occupations in sport within the National Qualifications Framework (for more refer to Radojević et al. 2019). In renouncing sport as a cognitive field, within which, in addition to the direct effects obtained by training and exercise, one can study "culture, the social value system, democratization, socialization, social stratification, political system, the practice of social organizations, the health of citizens", etc. (Wolfe et al., 2005), the academic community of Serbia has renounced both the function of sports as a catalyst for the development of society (Third Mission of Universities, for more refer to Jevtić, 2017), and the notion of academic research in the field of science and culture of physical activity! Sport, like art, is an activity that implies social interaction and inclusion, i.e. sport is a unique social-cultural good (Perry, 1997, 2006). The academic community has independently assessed and directed its conscious efforts towards an understanding of human movement through specific measurements of the effects of experimental forms of exercise. Intentionally or not the academic community thereby (1) dangerously reduced the notion of sport and administered over its scientific research exclusively according to measurable physiological, bio-neuro-motor, psychological, etc. factors of movement - exercise; (2) limiting the range of scientific methods of understanding within the mission of humanistic assessment of physical activity, hence also excluding the Olympic studies dealing with thereof; (3) giving up of higher axiological benefits of movement and exercise for the individual and society. From Aristotle, through Renaissance thinkers to contemporaries of the philosophy of exercise, the prevailing conclusion about the purpose of movement - exercise is the one that speaks of it as an activity that a person undertakes for the sake of their happiness, and not for the realization of some other agenda (assigning movement with some other purpose) (Kretschmar, Daireson, Luelin, Gleeves, 2020). Consciously or not, through his actions aimed at the NSS, Manojlović made a forward step towards the taxonomy of scientific, value, and business skills system that any serious academic community would include in its curricula. For two accreditation cycles already, the academic community of Serbia has been acting indolently, modestly, and without judgment!

### **Learning about sports organization**

The indolence, modesty, and lack of judgment of the scientific community of Serbia resulted in the limited professional competence of otherwise highly educated staff. Thus, the taxonomy of knowledge, as well as the business and entrepreneurial skills of bachelors, have become neglected professional fields in the 21st century. However, the lack of support from the academic community (science and teaching) was compensated in sport through situational learning<sup>11</sup>, which resulted in the acceptance of sports in its contemporary terms and, accordingly, in the onset of the vision for future development. The solutions adopted through situational learning have eventuated the planning of the method of achieving organizational and business efficiency of the NOC and the NSS.

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<sup>10</sup>Scientific field of Physical Education and Sports, classified in the group of Social-Humanistic Sciences.

<sup>11</sup>Situational learning theory encompasses the knowledge of leaders and experts engaged regarding the task that needs to be resolved (Jovanović, 2008).

The concept of "sports organization that improves itself through learning" was established to overcome the current state both within the NOC and in the entire system of sports and its environment. Very soon after the election of Manojlović to the Secretary-General, ensued the selection of staff for the assessment of the current situation, planning of development, followed by activities of briefing the NOC officials and other structures of the Serbian sports system on the current tendencies, future developments, and many other newly-established circumstances in sports. To determine the purpose and directions of development and envisioned changes, this teaching was conducted according to the principle "*conditio sine qua non*". At the time, numerous foreign experts in the field of the sports organization, management, and administration visited Serbia and Belgrade. The National Olympic Committee sent a great number of employees, students of sports and physical education, coaches, administrators in sports, researchers, doctors, etc. abroad for specialization. Seminars were organized for the improvement of sports administration, as well as forums of the NOC with topics such as digital media, internet, and extranet, children's sports, women in sports, physical education, etc. The issue of culture and history of sports, as well as sport itself, sustainable development, and ecology, have become regular topics in the program agendas of the NOC. Manojlović is one of the few from the world of sports in Serbia who recognized the value of learning and acquiring new knowledge and skills, and he expected nothing less from the employees in the NOC. The application of new knowledge took place continuously during the implementation of Olympic programs and through other initiatives in Serbia, as well as at competitions, where the new practice was valorized by the OCS delegations. The delegations included OCS officials who are acquainted with athletes, coaches, administrators, doctors, physiotherapists, sponsors, journalists, and even with the families of athletes and are aware of their many personal and professional qualities. They have developed two-way communication with the organizer and host of the competition, the IOC, as well as with representatives of other NOCs. The mission management can foresee and address every need of the delegation as a whole, but also of each member of the delegation. The NOC employees possess technical, interpersonal, conceptual, and linguistic skills, but they are also endowed with "Olympic skills and values" (taxonomy of skills of NOC employees)<sup>12</sup> (Jevtić, 2011).

### **OLYMPIC STUDIES - A FRAMEWORK FOR RECOGNIZING AN ERUDITE WHO STRIVES FOR PROSPERITY**

The Olympic movement, which has developed by respecting natural, social and economic laws, forms the identity of modern civilization. Nowadays, the movement and its future development are learned about, inter alia, through the analysis of innovation strategies grounded on knowledge, facts, system theories, methods, techniques, and sources of information (Perry, 2006). Therefore, Olympism rests on a clearly determined cognitive basis that encompasses a number of scientific fields and disciplines, which many would willingly claim are covered by the Olympic scientific system (Evtich, 2013)<sup>13</sup>.

The framework of Manojlović's activities, beginning with his appointment as Secretary-General of the National Olympic Committee (NOC), and Secretary of the European Non-Governmental Sports Organization (ENGSO), can be researched within the Olympic studies, which in terms of their theoretical

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<sup>12</sup> Technical, or know-how skills, related to methods, processes, procedures, techniques, etc. of work

- Interpersonal skills - relations, attitudes, motives, as well as abilities at spoken and written communication, encouraging team cooperation, etc.

- Conceptual skills that include analytical ability, logical thinking, deductive and inductive reasoning and illation, skills at solving problems, creativity, anticipatory skills, visionary abilities, strategic thinking.

<sup>13</sup> The system of Olympic sciences, Olympic marketing and its principles, communication, finance, economy, the basis of domestic and international law that regulates relations in sports, management, theories of organization, etc.

and practical properties of an intermediate cognitive level can be presented through its: **declarative function** (Olympism<sup>14</sup>, Olympic movement, Olympic Games, etc. sport in the function of development of people and society, culture, sustainable development, modernity, etc.); **interpretative function** (definitions, history, philosophy, Olympism, etc.); **applicative function** (mission, development, leadership, brand, standards, directions and opportunities, etc.); **critical features** (contradictions, arguments as challenges to development, new theoretical and practical paradigms, particularity and generality of Olympism as an ideology, etc.); **educational function** (learning, upbringing, sports skills, Olympic values, business skills, digital agenda, etc.), **cultural foundation** (movement and physical activity as part of a culture, affirmation of diversity and nurturing a culture of dialogue, etc.); **legitimate, true and credible knowledge** (corroborated, acquired through science and practice of sports).

Like any other theory and ensuing practice perfected by it, and vice versa, the Olympic studies can be described in terms of a purposeful cognitive context from which arises the pretext for planning the development of the sport itself, as well as the development of society through physical activity and exercise. In that regard, the identified clusters of (scientific) knowledge are related to education and upbringing, health, communications, art, culture, ecology, sustainable development, economy, law, axiology, nature-culture-sports relations, eco-friendly technologies, business, but also international relations, and politics (Jevtić, 2018). There is a legitimate impression that this "super theory" which, regarded as a system that combines knowledge, values, and practices, relies on relevant information from the sciences related to human physical activity, as well as scientific disciplines related to Olympism and sports (health sciences, social sciences, humanistic sciences, technical and educational sciences, etc.). The scientific status of the Olympic studies is determined by the amount of information available to staff, the number and quality of human resources in scientific institutions, as well as the manner of acquiring and disseminating scientific information and that of good practice. From 2001 to 2009, Serbia increased the number of human resources in sports, which then, accordingly raised their level of commitment for the prosperity of the NSS and NOC. The work of sports-medical institutions has been recognized as essential and their cognitive capacity has been improved.

The legacy and historical records of sports and Olympism in Serbia have been preserved in written and digital format. Artifacts from certain periods of sports and Olympic development have been duly collected and preserved. It seems that the subject of this article covers one of the most intensive periods in the affirmation of the ideas and values of sports - Olympism in Serbia, which is why it might be appropriate to assign it with the title: **Predrag Manojlović - National Mission of a Sports Visionary, Contribution to Management of the Olympic Development.**

### **The context of the competencies of Manojlović as an erudite and leader of Olympic development**

Managing Olympic development requires the joint and efficient application of various professional and personal competencies, which, when it comes to Predrag Manojlović, originated from: a) high education particularly in the field of various sciences, cultures, languages, politics, etc.; b) laudable personal and professional skills (for framing of an idea for development, choosing a strategic path, managing the process and dealing with the new situation, choosing of staff, etc.); c) his propensity for thinking outside-the-box; d) following the Latin saying: "Sapere aude" – "I dare know - I am determined to use my reason", his willingness, courage, and determination to take action; e) from his

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<sup>14</sup> Olympism is a social philosophy that emphasizes the place and role of sport in the development of civilization, international understanding, peace, coexistence, spiritual and moral education (Parry, 2009).

Olympic affiliations (an athlete and official). It could be summarized that Manojlović was one of those "de Coubertin athletes" who, while aspiring for personal excellence, found himself rooting for perfection and ideal conditions in sport and its environment in general. The ancient Greek attributes of *Aretas* and the *modern Olympian*<sup>15</sup> certainly suit him.

If the Olympic development leader could be described with the professional qualities and personal proclivities of Manojlović, then it might be said that he is an expert capable of: recognizing the essence - the nature of things (metaphysician); evaluating and applying knowledge (epistemologist); making decisions (logician); respecting, analyzing and understanding events and principles of organization and management (manager); they are normatively consecutive (planning and ensuring normative implementation of certain agenda); recognizes and answers to the challenges of relations between sports and society (politician). He was aesthetically inspired, committed to ethical and value norms and principles. He was particularly endowed with technical, interpersonal, conceptual, and practical skills.

The competencies of Manojlović as the leader of Olympic development may be identified with those Girginov lists as defining of a manager of sports development, namely: is a good negotiator, understands processes and politics, supports personal and organizational learning, has a wealth of knowledge - a source of information at their disposal, continuously evaluates processes in a formative and comprehensive manner, meaningfully intervenes and effectively manages conflicts, etc. (Girginov, 2008). Predrag Manojlović channeled all the listed qualities.

For the associates who worked alongside Manojlović, his kindness, understanding, support, and his other qualities were and remain an expression of the unique personality that stemmed from the ethos of the Olympian. In the Kantian sense, an appropriate term to describe Predrag Manojlović, would be ***Enlightened***. As a leader of Olympic development and in general, he was particularly characterized by spirituality, morality, education, good judgment, and comradeship. He was committed to the task and strived for achieving excellence, brave, innovative, resolute, just, levelheaded, moderate, righteous, etc. He is *Aretas* - an Olympian<sup>15</sup> in the complete sense of the term. In the field of his work, he has shown exceptional results and in many ways surpassed previous efforts in Olympic development and the development of sports in general!

### **PREDRAG MANOJLOVIĆ - VISIONARY, SPORTS ENTHUSIAST, OLYMPIAN, INNOVATORY MIND**

His experience from sports (Olympian), his education (Bachelor of Economics), his experience in politics and economy, supplemented by his knowledge in the field of the sports organization, Predrag Manojlović, Secretary-General of the NOC from 2001 to 2009, translated into the context of a new vision of sports development in Serbia.

With regard to the subject of study of this Editorial, we can conclude that the activity of Predrag Manojlović, as a visionary of the national system of sports and innovator, resulted in: business *improvement* of the NOC and NSS; putting the athlete - exerciser into the center of *attention of the sports system*; *internal harmonization of the NSS and integration* of thereof with its environment, etc. Following the ex-post elaboration and consideration of available documents, it can be concluded that the subject

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<sup>15</sup> An Olympian (in the full sense of the meaning) is one who is committed to the task and achieving excellence, brave, innovative, determined, just, discerning, wise, moderate, righteous.

period analyzed in this article, was substantially marked with the activities of Manojlović and his team manifested through the following innovation clusters:

1. **The National Olympic Committee.** Within this cluster, the following is highlighted: (a) the growth of the NOC into a medium-sized sports organization; (b) specialization, standardization, and professionalization of NOC into a democratic, business-efficient, and highly value-oriented NSO; (c) a great number of strategic, programmatic and development documents; (d) increasing the professional capacity of employees and all actors of the NOC and within the sports system; (e) continuous evaluation and appraisal of performed activities; (f) financial activities that accompany the progress of sport and an athlete; (g) programmatic integrity, organizational, managerial, financial transparency; (h) endorsement of missions and delegations in competitions within the competence of the NOC; (i) compliance with the programs, acts, and agendas of the IOC, the European Olympic Committee (EOC), the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), European non-governmental sports organizations, etc.
2. **Athlete – Olympian.** (endorsed, qualified, promising, gifted). Through the Olympic programs, athletes (individual and team) found themselves at the center of all the activities of the NOC. This cluster suggests three postulates of development of an athlete: (a) personal qualities and needs (in terms of health, knowledge, social, educational, professional qualities, etc.); (b) sports performance (methodological and technological response to modern training and competition, healthy athlete and zero tolerance to doping); and (c) organizational and managerial effectiveness, professionalization of factors in the athlete's environment, from coaches and sports clubs, NSO, society, sponsors, etc. to the NOC itself.
3. **National sports organization.** By harmonizing relations between NSO and Olympic and non-Olympic sports clubs and recreational organizations, the whole system of sports was directed towards changes that should result in (N)SO which would be characterized by loyalty, trust, will to compromise, methodical approach, attention to facts and detail, care, solvency, etc. Such (N)SO should then be fit and willing to organize and present sports to the Serbian society in accordance with the expectations and needs of the citizens of the 21st century.
4. **Sports coaches.** (above all, those directly responsible for athletes, but also selectors). The implemented activities were aimed at their more thorough formal, informal and non-formal education, i.e. training, as well as at solving social issues and problems this particular vocation and profession encounters. The Olympic agenda on this issue has changed and it considers that the education of sports personnel assigns the sport in general with the new function of "building a person". To address many issues related to the profession of a sports coach, a notable number of foreign experts visited Serbia and conducted training of personnel within our sports system, and likewise, a number of, primarily young coaches, attended training in referential international sports training organizations and research institutions.
5. **Sponsors and donors.** This is a cluster of innovations in the implementation of the economic and social mission of companies through co-financing the development of top-level sports and participatory sports, by supporting multi-sport events, and by endorsing strategies invented for achieving visibility, accessibility, relevance, and inclusion of all actors in the society through sports.
6. **The Republic of Serbia.** The Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the OCS (2007) established a framework for state co-financing of top sports throughout the Olympic cycle, including participation in the Olympics itself. The initiatives that led to the agreement with the state administration were transferred to provinces, regions, and units of the

local community, which were thereby given to partake in the development of sports infrastructure, implementation of sports-oriented strategies of development, as well as in co-financing of athletes, coaches and sports clubs that fall under their competence.

7. **The Society of Serbia.** Through everyday media exposure and presence in public discourse, written and digital media, TV shows, exhibitions, events, promotions, competitions, awards ceremonies, etc., the NOC was conveying messages of the social value of sports and the need for inclusion of all citizens in sports. To comprehend the social value of the Olympic movement in the Republic of Serbia, we need to take into account the educational national role of the Museum of Sports, as well as the publication of the monograph "Olimpijski Vekovnik 1910-2010", which in a historiographical, methodically and methodologically rightful manner presented the Olympic movement, Olympism, the Olympics, and the NOC itself, as a national sports and "cultural institution" at the helm of the century-long sports and Olympic tradition in Serbia, and, which through cultivating the values of sports and Olympism, has always been the bearer of progress and the process of integration of Serbian society into modern societies in Europe and worldwide.
8. **Human resources for 21<sup>st</sup> century sports.** Predrag Manojlović was open toward the ideas and skills of educated individuals of the new generation. He supported those who were willing to learn and develop professionally, and to use their "Olympic competencies" to influence the actors of the sports system and its environment, as well as to encourage others to realize the objective of sports in Serbia through the affirmation of personal and family exercise.
9. **According to the organization of (multi) sports competitions in Serbia, development of sports infrastructure and organizational capacities and structures for sports events.** After applying and lobbying that accompanied it, the OCS and Belgrade were awarded the organization of the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF), which, as the first multisport competition in Serbia, was held in the summer of 2007 in Belgrade. Even with a more than modest budget, holding this competition, besides the fact it has proved to be a complete success of the OCS delegation, produced numerous organizational, material, and systemic results, as well as personnel trained in various professions and expertise. A big step forward was made in the area of a volunteer organization for the requirements of sports and the society of Serbia. The staff at the Belgrade EYOF, personally selected by Manojlović, still hold key positions in national sports, international sports organizations, but also in public, national, and international companies.
10. **Following the Spirit of Olympism, the Olympic movement, and the Olympic Games.** If we arrange the program agenda (within the NOC, NSS, and sports activities at the European level) according to Manojlović's knowledge, personal and professional skills, we may find that he is an original contributor to the theoretical and practical framework of the Olympic studies. Through the taxonomy of his knowledge, skills, and implemented programs, it is possible to identify the framework of competencies of the leader of the Olympic development.
11. **International cooperation and participation of staff from Serbia in creating the European initiative of sports.** As the leader of the European Non-Governmental Sports Organization (ENGSO) and a member of the bodies of the Council of Europe and the European Olympic Committee, Manojlović advocated the sustainable development of sports for the benefit of an

The analysis of the extent, role, and significance of Predrag Manojlović's work and of his commitment to the NOC and NSS, to the society and history of Olympism in Serbia, workers in sports, and the pan-European sports initiative should not end here with this Editorial. Rather, further analysis should be conducted following the above-given, though it should also include other clusters of

innovation, under which the competencies of the leader of Olympic development such as Predrag Manojlović, are considered the *primus inter pares* of the prosperity of sports in Serbia and beyond.

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