



FREE

Football Research in
an Enlarged Europe

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Is football memory policy-relevant?

Exploring the history of European football and its contribution to collective memory may seem a rather trivial pursuit to some, but this underestimated area of academic research has the potential to reveal important insight into what holds Europe together.

Indulging in souvenirs has always been one of the favourite pastimes of the football fan. Reminiscing glorious victories and painful drama, comparing results and performances across generations, writing and re-writing the history of events is not only part of the enjoyment that football provides, but produces meaning, mental maps and shared memory.

But is this more than a harmless passion and endearingly nostalgic discourse? Is it worth being studied with serious academic method and rigour? Does it tell us something about contemporary society? In other words: is football memory policy-relevant?

Yes, it is.

At a time of high uncertainty about the future of the very idea of European integration, where it has become commonplace to bemoan the lack of a 'European identity', the absence of a 'European narrative', and the apparent resurgence of nationalist reflexes, it is essential to gain a better understanding of how perceptions of oneself, fellow European citizens or foreigners are actually constructed.

As one of the most prolific strands of historical research has shown over the last twenty years, such patterns of perception and self-perception are deeply rooted in collective memory. But unlike most of the scholarly work on European memory suggests, there is more to it than official, 'top-down' created memory as embodied in history textbooks and commemoration of past conflict through monuments and museums. There is a collective memory outside war, peace, and high culture. Football, like each form of popular culture has its 'wiki-memory', patiently put together through non-organised discourse

in a 'bottom-up' process that expresses, consolidates and transforms narratives and perception patterns. Football memory expresses and reveals what people think and feel about their belonging, about themselves and others, rather than what they're told to think and feel. That should be considered policy-relevant in a Europe of crisis, shouldn't it?

Of course, it can always be argued, not without some justification, that the construction of a supranational political project should be based on rational choice, cost-benefit analysis and common economic and geopolitical interest, rather than be affected by collective emotions. But both scholarly research and recent events (such as referendum campaigns in various member-states) have amply demonstrated the limits of rational-choice theory and the strong impact of emotional factors in collective and individual attitudes, voting behaviour and identity formation.

Certainly, emotional bonds between Europeans are not only shaped through political discourse about the pros and cons of various approaches to resolve the current debt crisis, but also through widely spread social practices outside the political or institutional context.

Football is such a practice and it is a powerful producer of emotions. Its 'wiki-memory' stores images and representations of communities of all sorts in a sub-cultural European space of communication. It has a story to tell about what Europeans spontaneously think about themselves and each other.

Is that policy-relevant?

Of course it is!

Albrecht Sonntag

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Origins & Birth of a Europe of Football

The FREE Conference in Besançon (France), 28-29 September 2012

The conference 'Origins and Birth of a Europe of Football' was organised on Friday 28 and Saturday 29 September at the Université de Franche-Comté (Besançon-France) on the premises of the 'Unité promotion/formation/recherche des sports' (Promotion / training / research on sport unit). The conference gathered about 50 researchers and participants who came to communicate (13), lead and comment on (6), or simply attend the debate (32). The conference was supported by the research programme of the Work Package 3 'The History of the Europeanisation of Football through Competitions' and impeccably organised by Work Package leader Paul Dietschy and Xavier Breuil.

The title of the conference – 'Origins and Birth of a Europe of Football' – reflects the hypothesis that the first 'Europe of football' was not born in the years 1954-56, between the creation of a continental football confederation (l'Union des Associations Européennes de Football – UEFA) and the final of the first European Champion Clubs' Cup won in Paris by Real Madrid against Stade de Reims. Instead, the hypothesis is that the origins of a Europe of football are to be found between the beginning of the century and the start of World War 2.

This first historical conference of the FREE project was kicked off by the opening lecture of **Tony Mason** (DeMontfort University), which showed the ambivalent relationship between the football of England and of the old continent. Initially, the football players from the other side of the Channel considered the sporting exchanges with Europe to be occasions to make sporting tourism or to find a job as a coach or

player. From the interwar period, English football players and coaches were divided. On the one hand, 'isolationists' considered that only the British had mastered the art of playing football; on the other hand, modernisers wanted to get inspiration from the ways of playing developed in Central Europe. This keynote lecture given by one of the founding fathers of academic football history, made it possible to define one of the frameworks for thinking the history of football in particular and of European football in general: the cross-channel exchanges between continental Europe and the United Kingdom and the definition of oneself with regard to 'the other'.

Four sessions organised around thematic and chronological elements followed:

1. From the United Kingdom to Europe: the constitution of a European football space

The first session dealt with the constitution of the European football space. Before 1914, European football cannot be comprehended without taking into account the development of internationalism in all its forms: scientific, intellectual and, in general, pacifist. What was called the international game at the time condenses all the ambivalence of sporting internationalism: it is about confrontations, and the constitution of an international hierarchy, yet at the same time, about sharing

football's progress, while always keeping in sight what the British masters were doing. From before 1914, the European sports press liked to devote columns to football practiced abroad, and its progress.



This is what **Geoffrey Hare** (Newcastle University) showed on the basis of an analysis of the English-speaking press. International games were first contested between clubs, which sometimes had a national name (the 'Club Français' in Paris for example). The games were first about measuring yourself against the English masters, but were also about defending national honour. The press, and notably the *New York Herald*, contributed to giving internationalecho to these games played at the very beginning of the twentieth century. At the same time the adjective 'international' increased the status of the game, endorsing the virtuous circle of media promotion, proselytism and vulgarisation of football. And the European international game of reference in the interwar period remained the confrontation between a European and a British team.

The example of the yearly encounters between London's Arsenal and the Racing Club de Paris, studied by **Michaël Delépine** (Université Paris-Ouest Nanterre-La Défense) provides a good illustration. They attest to a particular relationship inherited from the alliance and the common sacrifice of the First World War, since this annual friendship game, which was launched in 1930 and went on until 1962, celebrated the sacrifice of French and British soldiers and football players. Whenever possible, it was symbolically scheduled on Remembrance Day, November 11. The games also served to transfer technical and cultural aspects, since the Racing was the first French, or even European club to practice the WM tactics developed by Arsenal's manager, Herbert Chapman.

Women were not absent from the constitution of this first European football space. As **Gertrud Pfister** (Københavns Universitet) recalled, the beginnings of women football in Europe came together straight after WW1 with international games opposing national teams representing England, France and Belgium. Europe even had its first transnational female football stars, but its quick and surprisingly dynamic development met with the resistance of the national federations who banned women from the grounds used by men's teams.

2. Around the creation of the European football Cups

As in many fields of European international exchanges, including economics and intellectual life, football was marked by the interwar Europeanism. Even though the Fédération Internationale de Football association (FIFA) chose a world format to organise its international championship (World Cup) from 1930 onwards, regional competitions were born in all of Europe. **Grégory Quin** (Uni-



versité de Lausanne) reminded us, from the analysis of multiple sources, how the Mitropa and International Cups were constituted around the kernel of Mitteleuropa and Italy, respectively. Football excellence and political considerations intertwined to give birth to these important moments of the European football calendar from 1927 onwards.

Elaborated from 1929 around a political and sporting axis uniting Romania and Yugoslavia, the Balkan Cup, first contested by national teams, provides another mirror for the geopolitics of the 1930s, according to **Xavier Breuil** (FREE project) and **Pompiliu-Nicolae Constantin** (Universitatea din București). Sporting passions were declined according to the alliances of the Little Entente. At the same time, this form of regional organisation rapidly ran its course: Greek, Romanian, Turkish and Yugoslav teams aspired to other horizons and other opponents.

The same observation can be made about the Latin Cup discussed by **Stéphane Mourlane** (Université de Provence). Its birth in 1949 had to do with the financial strengthening of Spanish, Italian and French professional clubs, as much as it

had to do with the will to revive the concept of Latinity after the rifts of WW1. And if the competition organised at the end of the sporting season constituted a test bench for the European competitions to come, it also reveals the insufficiencies of purely regional groupings and became redundant with the creation of first truly European Cups.

3. European footballers

The development of international games put in the highlight players that could be called Europeans, in the sense that their career made them cross many borders, or in the sense that they became reference points for football players of the old continent. The biography of Ernst Willimowski presented by **Diether Blecking** (Universität Freiburg) has to do with the first case. Born in 'Upper Silesia', this remarkably prolific striker was first the greatest Polish player of the 1930s, before becoming German after the invasion of Poland, and after wearing the jersey of Germany during WW2. Willimowski, who remains the only player ever to have scored against and for the German team, is representative of a generation of football players handicapped by their birth place and whose sporting career was strongly disturbed by the rifts in Europe.



The career of Stanley Matthews recounted by **Claude Boli** (Musée National des Sports) was less troubled by the jolts of history, even though it had to stop during WW2. The European figure of Matthews is ambiguous: he is indeed the European football player of reference, as testified by the fact that he received the very first *Ballon d'Or* (the prize for the European football player of the year) awarded from 1956 onward by the French weekly *France*

Football. Curiously, in 1956, Matthews was already well beyond the heydays of his long career, while players like Alfredo di Stefano had just won the first European Cup with Real Madrid. To a certain extent, the award of the *Ballon d'Or* may thus also be considered a (last?) homage given to English football, then in stark decline, by continental journalists.

4. The territories of European football

The construction of a Europe of football not only contributed to forge sporting identities at the same time national, international and transnational; it has also allowed to represent European territories in a different manner, to redraw its geography. **Özgehan Şenyuva** (Middle East Technical University, Ankara) and **Sevecen Tunc** (University of Boğaziçi) have shown how football constituted an ambivalent way to assert Turkey's European identity. The managers of the Turkish football association insisted, notably in the 1950s, in joining UEFA against FIFA's decision to keep Turkey within the Asian confederation. They did so for both geopolitical and sporting reasons: their main motivation was to anchor their national team to the modernity of European football and draw inspiration for improvement by playing against the best!

Football has also allowed asserting the existence of territories separated by the Cold War. If swimmers and athletes embodied the sporting diplomacy of East-Germany, football also contributed to give an identity to this 'popular democracy'. **Alan McDougall** (University of Guelph) recalled how between 1956 and 1965 the very short-lived campaigns of East-German teams in the European Cups, constituted an ambiguous link between West and East at the time of the iron curtain.

Contact with the West was sought in order to raise standards and deepen socialist influence in 'bourgeois' international sports organisations. But it was also feared, due to the superiority of capitalist teams over communist ones in the continent's most popular sport. In later years some outstanding teams managed to do much better, such as FC Magdeburg's 1974 Cup Winners Cup victory or Carl

Zeiss Jena's 1981 runner-up place in the same competition after having eliminated Roma, Valencia and Lisbon and gave more international visibility to a sport that, on the home front, was caught in a multifaceted relationship between dictatorial authority (with direct impact on results) and resistance by fans and players whose reference points remained West-German football.



Jean-Christophe Meyer (Université de Strasbourg and Universität Freiburg) has analysed the power of television in the constitution of a European football space in the 1970s on both sides of the Rhine. In both France and Germany the national federations and the presidents of the professional clubs gave a very lukewarm welcome, to say the least, to television's increased engagement with the game, mainly for fear that regular broadcast would empty the terraces. This fear was less present for European games, as attendance at mid-week evening fixtures was restricted to the locals anyway. As a result the small screen accompanied the success of the European Cups. And not only the Cups, for that matter, but also the early stages of European stardom: as Jean-Christophe Meyer pointed out in response to Claude Boli's paper on Stanley Matthews, the presentation, by of the *Ballon d'Or* to its very first laureate was the occasion of a truly European football TV show between London (where BBC officials and British sportsmen commented on Matthew's achievements), Paris (where Gabriel Hanot

from France Football presented the trophy live from the *Moulin de la Galette*), and Manchester, from where Matthews himself gave his thank-you speech in response to these 'European honours'.

Conclusion and assessment

In terms of dissemination of the FREE project's activities, the conference was certainly a success. The presence in the audience of great number of international researchers from different countries has made it possible to get people to become familiar with the FREE team, the different research strands and the entire project.

In terms of research findings, the various contributions have shown the variety of aspirations to a Europe of football. This Europe first was created through sporting internationalism, whose reference point long remained British, then second

took the shape of regional competitions with a strong political imprint. The media played an essential role in the success of these enterprises, from the written press to television, through the radio.

From the point of view of Work Package 3, the conference made it possible to complete the first stage of field research led by **Xavier Breuil** in different European archives from 1 June to 30 September 2012 on the Central European Cups, the Balkan Cup and the participation of Belgian and Dutch football players to the construction of a Europe of football.

The best contributions are currently being selected in order to prepare a publication as special issue in a European historical journal. The details should be known in the first half of 2013. The conference will also make a contribution to the book written by **Paul Dietschy** and **Xavier Breuil** on the Europe of football (publication forecast: first half of 2015).

Videos of the papers presentations from the conference on 'the Origins & Birth of a Europe of Football' in Besançon are available from the FREE website: www.free-project.eu

European football & collective memory

Provisional programme of the forthcoming FREE Conference in Stuttgart

Friday 22 February 2013

9h-9h15: Welcome & introduction

9h15-9h45: Keynote lecture

- ☉ Habbo Knoch: *Nations of memorable moments: Mass media and football communities in the 20th century*

10h-12h: Theoretical perspectives

- ☉ Tobias Werron: *How are global contests possible? A historical-sociological perspective on the creation of global sports events*
- ☉ Arne Niemann & Alexander Brand: *Europeanisation from below? Football spectatorship, mediatization and European identity*
- ☉ Michael Groll: *UEFA football competitions as European sites of memory - cups of identity?*

14h30-17h30: European football competitions and memory

- ☉ Jürgen Mittag: *Negotiating the cold war? Early European competitions & European nation cups between confrontation and rapprochement*
- ☉ Geoff Hare: *Football and the European collective memory in Britain: the case of the 1960 European Cup Final*
- ☉ Borja Garcia, Agustín Martín & Ramón Llopis-Goig: *The contribution of Real Madrid's five European Cups to the emergence of a European football space*
- ☉ Jean-Christophe Meyer: *The French discussions on the famous Wembley goal*
- ☉ Albrecht Sonntag: *Le Ballon d'Or – a cold war bridge between East and West?*



Saturday 23 February 2013

8h45-10h: Case studies on Eastern Europe

- ☉ Seweryn Dmowski: *Football sites of memory in the Eastern Bloc 1945–1990*
- ☉ Stefan Zwicker: *The Prague and Czechoslovak football in the cold war period*



10h15-13h: Case studies on Western Europe

- ☉ Anthony May: *'Thursday Night, Channel Five' – The meanings attributed to the UEFA Europa League by football fans & the media in England*
- ☉ Dàvid Ranc: *George Best: British or European symbol?*
- ☉ Clemens Kech: *The Heysel Stadium disaster and its symbolic value in Europe's collective memory*

12h45-13h15: Conclusion

15h-18h: General Assembly of the FREE project (consortium members only)

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Researching football governance from the supporters' perspective

Presentation of research from Work Package 8 – Borja García-García

Loughborough University is responsible for the research strand on governance within the FREE Project. In line with the project research objectives and with the consortium philosophy to study football at individual / citizen level, our research objectives focus on the experiences of football supporters as part of the governance structures of football. Our work is fully dedicated to the supporters. We want to understand why, how & the extent to which supporters do engage with football structures.

There is an on-going discourse among policy makers that football supporters need to be included as stakeholders of the game. There is, however, very little research done on whether fans themselves want to get involved. We also want to understand how football supporters feel about the current state of football. We would like to know the extent to which supporters feel empowered by the current structures. Another of our objectives is to find out whether there is a demand for regulation of the rampant commercialisation of football in Europe.

The new structures of football in Europe have meant new owners, an increase in ticket prices, and the relocation of teams, among other things. It is quite generally felt, however, that the voice and the feelings of the supporters are not taken into account. This project wants to study the opinions, feelings, thoughts and ideas of football supporters. This project focuses on football supporters that engage with their clubs at different levels, from simple fans to those who actively participate in the running of their club and other supporters' networks. The purpose of the study is to find out what football supporters think of current developments in the governance of the game.

We believe these are highly pertinent questions of extreme importance for the study of football. We also believe these questions are equally relevant to



political debates around European football governance and the role of supporters. We feel that most of the research to date has been focused on the so-called meso-level or institutional level, whilst the feeling and experiences of supporters have not been explored in depth. Our review of the current academic literature reveals only piecemeal research on supporter views and experiences, mostly at a very local level.

We have designed an ambitious research plan thanks to the funding received through FP7. It is also a very innovative methodology within the social sciences. We are confident that our research design will give us the best insight into supporters' football experience. Our methodology is divided in four different stages: participant-led audio-visual diaries, online surveys, content analysis of Internet forums and semi-structured interview.

Our methodology follows a new trend in audio-visual sociology. But perhaps more importantly, in this research we are really going to let the fans speak for themselves! We will recruit 30 UK football fans and up to 40 in other European countries. We will ask the participants to take pictures of their football experience over a period of 6 to 8 weeks. We will then ask the participants to record an audio diary in relation to 4 different 'football events' during the 8 weeks. All this data collection will be powered by a smartphone app that we are designing in collaboration with a local Leicestershire-based company. Thus, our research is truly led by the participants! There is no mediation of the research team and we will hear directly the participants' thoughts.

This is an ambitious methodology, but we are confident that it will yield interesting results. To facilitate access we are pleased to count on the support and collaboration of Supporters Direct, Sup-

porters Direct Europe, the English FA and Football Supporters Europe. These organisations are actively supporting this work package and, at the same time, they are part of FREE's civil society network. Our sincere thanks go to them.

The research team of this work package is composed by Dr Borja García, Dr Brett Smith and Dr Jo Welford. We all have been working very hard behind the scenes during the last few months to pre-

pare everything we need for the first stage of field-work. Actually, we are about to launch our first call for participants. For supporters, it is their opportunity to be heard! If you are reading this newsletter and you are perhaps thinking that it would be fun to get involved as one of our participants, why not email us at freeproject@lboro.ac.uk. The involvement and commitment of football supporters is paramount for the success of our research.

Network News

☉ **Ramón Llopis-Goig** (Valencia) was elected President of the Spanish Association of Social Research Applied to Sport (AEISAD) at the last Conference that the Association held in San Sebastian. *'Nuestras felicitaciones más sinceras'*, Ramón, and good luck on your new mission!

☉ **Jo Welford** joined the FREE team in Loughborough as a Research Associate. Jo wrote her PhD on the organisational structure of women's football in the UK, in particular the role of governing bodies, from the perspective of women involved with the sports at the grassroots level as players, supporters, coaches and club administrators (more [here](#)). Welcome on board, Jo!



☉ **Wolfram Pyta** (Stuttgart) served as member on the international jury of **Jean-Christophe Meyer's** successful PhD viva at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Strasbourg (4 December 2012). Jean-Christophe, who presented a well-noticed paper at the Besançon conference and is due to present another one at the Stuttgart conference in February, wrote his dissertation on the emergence of football broadcasting on television, its reception by the press in France and Germany between 1950-1966, and the way in which this new TV offer contributed to identity-building on both the national and European level. *'Herzliche Glückwünsche'* from the FREE consortium!

☉ **Paul Dietschy** (Besançon) has successfully defended his 'Habilitation' thesis at Sciences Po (Paris, 26 Nov. 2012). A 'Habilitation' or HDR is a higher doctorate (comparable to a Litt.D. awarded on publications) which formally grants the right to supervise doctoral work. The topic of the defence was 'The Great Match: French sport between war and peace (1914-1920)' (more [here](#)). The distinguished jury of seven eminent French and British historians congratulated Paul on his meticulous exploration of historical sources and his prolific writing over the past 15 years which has made him the number one football historian in Francophone academia. *'Félicitations'* from the FREE team for this achievement!

☉ **Nils Havemann's** cultural history of the Bundesliga, *Samstags um halb vier: Die Geschichte der Fußballbundesliga* will be published by Siedler in May 2013. The Bundesliga celebrates its 50th birthday in 2013, and the book, whose title refers to its traditional kick-off time of 'Saturday afternoon half past three' puts this remarkable socio-cultural & economic phenomenon in the perspective of the Republic's history.



☉ **Albrecht Sonntag** (Angers) was invited to speak at a conference on the history of the World Cup to be held at the FIFA headquarters in Zurich on 24-27 April 2013. The conference will bring together some 20 international experts for an academic exchange on the political, socio-cultural and economic impact of the individual World Cups since 1930. Albrecht will assess the legacy of France98, both for the host nation and for the game.

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