



The transformation of European football

Towards the Europeanisation of the national game

Edited by

ARNE NIEMANN, BORJA GARCÍA AND WYN GRANT

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Acknowledgments

The origins of this volume go back to debates on several conference panels, more seriously beginning with the first Sport & EU conference in Loughborough in 2006, followed by a panel at the European Union Studies Association conference in Montreal (2007). Perhaps the experience of drawing quite big audiences at international conventions (while being cramped into the smallest conference rooms) provided extra motivation for a joint publication at the nexus of European politics, economics and law, on the one hand, and football on the other. After Montreal more concrete exchanges took place between the three of us concerning the idea of a volume on the transformation of European football with Europeanisation as a central theme. After successfully enlisting specialist authors – both upcoming and more established researchers – for the various chapters, we met for an intensive workshop in Amsterdam in June 2009 to discuss the authors' drafts. The workshop not only helped to fine-tune the direction of the volume and yield input for the authors but also enabled those who had not already met to be socialised into the group.

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A.N.
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Contents

List of illustrations	vii
List of tables	viii
Notes on the contributors	ix
Acknowledgments	xiv

1 Introduction: the transformation of European football Arne Niemann, Borja García and Wyn Grant	1
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Part I Context

2 Europe: the transformation of football Richard Parrish	23
3 UEFA and the European Union: the green shoots of a new European public space? Jonathan Hill	40

Part II Country studies

4 Germany: between modest adjustment and system transformation Alexander Brand and Arne Niemann	59
5 England: a liberal model under challenge? Wyn Grant	80
6 France: a case of UEFAisation? David Ranc and Albrecht Sonntag	97
7 Italy: the least of the great leagues? Osvaldo Croci, Nicola Porro and Pippo Russo	115
8 Spain: parochialism or innovation? Borja García, Alberto Palomar Olmeda and Carmen Pérez González	134
9 The Netherlands: the problematic future of Dutch football Otto Holman, Rik de Ruiter and Rens Vliegenthart	152

10	The Europeanisation of Austrian football: historically determined and modern processes Alexander Brand, Arne Niemann and Georg Spitaler	171
11	Sweden: the development of club football on the periphery of Europe Torbjörn Andersson, Jyri Backman and Bo Carlsson	187
12	Poland: new shape, old problems Magdalena Kędzior and Melchior Szczepanik	204
13	Switzerland: professionalisation and internationalisation, courtesy of the EU and UEFA Dirk Lehmkuhl and Olivier Siegrist	221
14	Conclusion: a Europeanised game? Borja García, Arne Niemann and Wyn Grant	239
	Index	263

List of illustrations

3.1	Number of different teams reaching the UEFA Champions League quarter-finals in the previous three years. <i>Source</i> UEFA	45
3.2	Number of places occupied in the quarter-finals of the UEFA Champion Clubs Cup and Champions League by the eleven most successful teams between 1989 and 2009. <i>Source</i> UEFA	45
3.3	The proportion of top players playing in England, Germany, Italy and Spain. <i>Source</i> Data from Fifa.com, the <i>European Football Yearbooks</i> and PlayerHistory.com, analysis by NERA	48
7.1	Average number of spectators per match, Serie A, 1962–2006. <i>Source</i> Centro Studi Lega Calcio, www.lega-calcio.it/it/Lega-Calcio/Bacheca/Regolamenti/Centro-Studi.page .	118
7.2	Percentage of expatriate players and average number of players under contract per club, Serie A, 1995–2009. <i>Source</i> Compiled from the data bank of the Associazione Italiana Calciatori, www.calciatori.com	120
9.1	Positions of traditional top three clubs on UEFA ranking. <i>Source</i> UEFA (2009)	155
9.2	Revenues of Dutch clubs compared with Real Madrid and Manchester United. <i>Source</i> Deloitte (2007, 2008, 2009)	155
9.3	Foreigners playing in major Dutch league (Eredivise). <i>Source</i> Elfvoetbal (2009)	157
9.4	Transfers of Dutch players to English, Italian, Spanish and German leagues. <i>Source</i> <i>Dutch Players Abroad</i> (2009)	157
10.1	Shares of foreign players by country of origin	176
13.1	Average revenues of SFL Clubs, 2003–2008. <i>Source</i> Swiss Football League magazine No. 2/2009: 28	231

List of tables

3.1	Average number of different teams finishing in the top five positions over the previous five years	46
3.2	Deloitte 2009 survey of Europe's richest clubs	47
3.3	Eleven teams to have reached most UEFA Champions League quarter-finals between 1989 and 2009	47
3.4	Phasing in of UEFA 'home-grown players' rule	55
3.5	Options available to clubs to respond to 'home-grown players' rule in 2006–2007	55
4.1	Development of German-born players, UEFA residents and non-UEFA residents before and after the Bosman ruling	62
4.2	The systematisation of Europeanisation processes in German football across sub-cases	74
7.1	Serie A net profits and losses, 1998–2008	116
8.1	Nationality quotas in Spanish football, 1928 to the present	138
8.2	Number of players fielded in the Spanish Primera División, 1995–2009	139
8.3	Television revenue of the top Spanish clubs in the 2007–2008 season	145
9.1	Most expensive transfers of Dutch League players to foreign clubs and most expensive transfers of foreign players to Dutch clubs, January 2003–September 2008	159
9.2	Dutch national team players: present club, number of games played in national team and number of goals scored in national team, March 2009	160
11.1	Average attendance in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, 2002 and 2008	196

Introduction: the transformation of European football

Arne Niemann, Borja García and Wyn Grant

Although football – better known as ‘soccer’ in some parts of the world – is still in its infancy as a subject of study in the social sciences, there is a growing body of literature which tries to describe and explain important political, economic and social dimensions of the game. This tendency is more evident within the globalisation debates, where football is taken to be one of the most globalised phenomena (e.g. Foer 2004; Giulianotti and Robertson 2007). Other authors have also tried to establish a link between European integration and the development of football in the continent (e.g. Missiroli 2002), whilst the study of the impact of European Union (EU) law and policies on football has also attracted considerable academic attention (e.g. Holt 2007; Parrish 2003; Parrish and Miettinen 2008; García 2007, 2009). However, most authors have concentrated on the European level of football governance, with fewer attempts made to link the supranational policies of the EU with organisational transformations of football at national level (see for example King 2003 as one of the possible exceptions, although he does not focus on EU politics and policies as a main force behind the game’s evolution; see also Brand and Niemann 2007).

In this book we analyse the evolution of national football structures in ten different European countries. For that purpose we have chosen to rely on an analytical framework based on the concept of Europeanisation. It is recognised from the outset that the transformation of football in Europe is due to a combination of different factors (local, national, international), and that is evident in the contributions to this volume. The chapters ahead explain change through different mechanisms and dynamics in order to evaluate the degree of importance of EU decisions within those dynamics. However, the contributions in this volume find their common ground in the concept of Europeanisation, which is broadly defined as the impact of European governance on the domestic arena.

By focusing on the impact of European integration on the domestic level the book reflects the evolution of the EU integration studies research agenda: after four decades of attention on developments of integration at the European level,

in the mid-1990s scholars have increasingly begun to examine the effect that EU politics and policies may have at the domestic level. Even though research on Europeanisation has turned into something like an academic growth industry in recent years, it merits continued systematic academic attention, for several reasons. The Europeanisation research agenda arguably focuses on a set of very important research questions, related to where, how, why and to what extent domestic change occurs as a consequence of European integration/governance. Second, judged against five decades that European integration studies have focused on explaining and describing the emergence and development of a supranational system of European cooperation, research on Europeanisation is still at comparatively early stages. Third, it is difficult to make firm (cause-and-effect) generalisations in this field of inquiry, given, for example, the considerable variation in national institutional histories, actor constellations and structural differentiation and the wide scope of EU policies (cf. Olsen 2002: 933 ff.).

This volume concentrates on professional football, the sport that is subject to most (well known) European level cases and decisions. In the last ten to fifteen years the development of sport as an industry has reached peak levels: '[a] study presented in 2006 suggests that sport in a broad sense generated value added of €407 billion in 2004 [throughout the European Union], accounting for 3.7 per cent of EU GDP, and employment for 15 million people or 5.4 per cent of the labour force' (European Commission 2007a: 11). The social importance of football and other sports in Europe should not be underestimated either. Sport plays a significant role in health promotion, education, training and social inclusion and networking (European Commission 2007b: 7). Unfortunately, there are no disaggregated data to single out the contribution of football to this economic and social development, but it seems safe to assume that football is the most popular team sport throughout Europe. It is perhaps not far from the truth, either, to assert that football is one of the main factors in the economic and commercial development of professional sport as an industry. Moreover, the economic importance of professional football spills over to other markets, especially the audio-visual industry (e.g. Kruse and Quitzau 2003). Possessing rights to live games in leagues is a vital determinant of the success or otherwise of television companies, particularly those using cable, satellite or pay-per-view formats. Football's influence cuts across political, economic social and cultural spheres, and should also be illustrative of other sectors of European sport.

In this introductory chapter we set the conceptual foundations that will inform the book's analysis throughout. First, we concentrate on specifying the concept of Europeanisation. Part II systematises alternative explanatory factors that can account for the transformation of European football. Thirdly, we briefly justify the selection of case studies. Finally, we give an outline of the book's structure.

The concept of Europeanisation

Research on Europeanisation has gradually increased since the mid-1990s and has developed into an academic growth industry over the first decade of the century.¹ While the term Europeanisation has been taken up by most (sub-)disciplines in the humanities and social sciences focusing on Europe, it is arguably in the area of political science scholarship dealing with European integration that the concept has been used most widely. In this latter field alone, the term Europeanisation is used in a number of different ways to describe a variety of phenomena and processes of change (cf. Olsen 2002). Most frequently Europeanisation is referred to as the impact of European/EU governance on domestic change, in terms of policy substance and instruments, processes of interest representation and policy style, as well as (political) structures and institutions (e.g. Radaelli 2000: 3; Ladrech 1994: 69). Existing policies (in integrated sectors) are increasingly made at the European level, which leads to substantial changes in the policy fabric (and content) of EU member states (e.g. Caporaso and Jupille 2001). At the level of politics, European governance impacts on domestic processes of political and societal interest representation and aggregation as well as on the policy style (e.g. Hartcourt and Radaelli 1999). In terms of polity, Europeanisation focuses on the effect of EU integration and European-level governance on domestic (mainly political) structures and institutions (e.g. Börzel 2001).

Top-down and bottom-up Europeanisation

As a starting point, Europeanisation is understood here as the process of change in the domestic arena resulting from the European level of governance. However, Europeanisation is viewed not as a unidirectional but as a two-way process which develops both top down and bottom up. Top-down perspectives largely emphasise vertical developments from the European to the domestic level, which has also been referred to as 'downloading' (Ladrech 1994; Schmidt 2002). Bottom-up (or 'uploading') accounts stress the national influence concerning European-level developments (which in turn feeds back into the domestic realm). This perspective highlights that member states are more than passive receivers of European-level pressures. They may shape policies and institutions on the European level to which they have to adjust at a later stage (Börzel 2002). By referring to Europeanisation as a two-way process our conceptualisation underlines the interdependence of the European and domestic levels for an explanation of Europeanisation (processes). In contrast to a unidirectional top-down use of the concept, studying Europeanisation as a two-way process entails certain disadvantages in terms of (waning) conceptual parsimony and methodological straightforwardness. However, we argue that these problems are outweighed by a substantially greater ability to capture important empirical phenomena. It has convincingly been shown, for example, that member states' responses to Europeanisation processes

feed back into the European level of decision making. Thus European/EU policies, institutions and processes cannot be taken as given, but are, at least to some extent, the result of domestic political preferences and processes which are acted out at the European level (Börzel 2002, 2003; Dyson 2000).

However, as will be further specified later on, framing Europeanisation processes as the interplay of the European realm and the domestic realm still constitutes a considerable simplification. For example, transnational (non-EU)-level developments may provide important properties of Europeanisation (cf. next sub-section). In addition, related to the previous point, it should be pointed out that for us Europeanisation does not equate with 'EUisation'. Rather the EU is only part (albeit an important one) of the wider fabric of cross-border regimes in Europe in which other transnational institutions and frameworks, both formal and informal, also play a role. Hence the EU is not the monopoly source and channel of Europeanisation (cf. Wallace 2000: esp. 371, 376). This may include institutional arrangements at the European level which are related to European integration and co-operation in a broader sense, such as the Council of Europe (COE) or the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) at the political level but also organisations such as the Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC) and – more important in this context – the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), at the societal level.²

While working with a fairly wide notion of Europeanisation, it is important to delimit the concept clearly in order to avoid the danger of overstretching it. For example, we would reject 'the emergence and development *at the European level* of distinct structures of governance' as an appropriate definition of Europeanisation (Risse *et al.* 2001: 3, authors' emphasis). Closely related, Europeanisation as conceived of here is to be distinguished from 'political unification of Europe' (Olsen 2002: 940). Although above we have pointed out that our conceptualisation relates to interaction with the European integration process and to changes at the European/EU level, the core focus remains on the process of change *in the domestic arena*.³ In addition, Europeanisation should not be confused with 'harmonisation' and also differs from 'convergence'. Europeanisation may lead to harmonisation and convergence, but such is not necessarily the case. Empirical findings indicate that Europeanisation may have a differential impact on national policy making and that it leaves considerable margin for domestic diversities (cf. Héritier *et al.* 2001; Caporaso and Jupille 2001). Moreover, as pointed out by Radaelli (2000: 5) there is a difference between a process (Europeanisation) and its consequences (e.g. potentially harmonisation and convergence).

The societal/transnational dimension of Europeanisation

Apart from top-down (downloading) and bottom-up (uploading) accounts of Europeanisation, we would like to highlight an aspect that has been neglected in the literature that is relevant for some of the empirical analysis of the chapters