



FREE

Football Research in
an Enlarged Europe

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 7 (2015)

www.free-project.eu

You haven't seen the last of us yet

One thing the history of football has taught us for sure is that no triumph is forever, no trauma is definite, each final whistle is followed by a new kick-off. 'After the match is before the match', the great Sepp Herberger used to remind enthusiasts after a victory. And following a smashing defeat or a relegation there is reassuring comfort in the saying 'Great teams never die'.

Research is just the same: it's never really over if you're passionate enough about it. No new knowledge is final. Contexts and configurations change. And if your research is really relevant to your time and society, rather than answering all the questions, it will tend to raise new ones. The forthcoming event on 17 March in Brussels – the 8th and final game of a season that started in spring 2012 – is likely to both answer and raise questions.

Of course, there will be some answers to questions that the FREE team has actually devoted its time and energy to during the past three years. What has come out of the collaborative and interdisciplinary research we conducted? What insight into the role of football in society has been produced? What were the limits of the research methods applied?

At the same time, the very design of this concluding event should make sure some new questions will be raised. Instead of simply presenting research findings in an (inevitably boring) succession of academic presentations, we have opted for an organisation in (hopefully lively) roundtables, where experts that are external to the consortium will discuss the conclusions drawn by the FREE project (see the detailed programme in this issue).

Recommendations, suggestions, contradictions will be put to good use. Especially as the official end of the 3-year

period during which the project has been funded by the 7th Framework Programme is clearly not the final whistle to the project. Quite the contrary: it's rather the kick-off to a whole new season of publication and dissemination all throughout 2015 and beyond.

To start with, FREE will be present at the forthcoming World Congress on Science and Football in Copenhagen in May, at the 10th Conference of the Sport&EU association in

Angers at the end of June, as well as at the Annual UACES European Studies Conference in Bilbao in September. Even more importantly, research output will begin to be released.

The two complete 'Key Findings Reports' of the quantitative surveys will be made public on the FREE website. Three PhD candidates, who are currently sweating over the last lines of their dissertation, will defend their theses shortly. And the publishers Palgrave Macmillan will launch the brand new 'Football in an Enlarged Europe' book series, to which we wish a long and happy life and which will

keep authors and editors busy for the foreseeable future (see also the interview with Harriet Barker in this issue).

In other words: you have not heard the last of us yet! This newsletter will continue to appear – albeit perhaps in a slightly reduced format – and the website will remain active and updated, even if its scope, from a strictly defined FP7 project, may evolve into a larger, more inclusive network platform.

Some good reasons to keep in touch! And confirm the timeless truth of Herberger's words of wisdom: 'after the match is always before the match'.

Albrecht Sonntag

(ESSCA School of Management)



Picture courtesy of L. Equipe

The FREE – Football Research in an Enlarged Europe – project has received funding from the European Union's 7th Framework Programme for research, technological development & demonstration under grant agreement N° 290805.

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Whose Game Is It? Whose Game Should It Be?

The FREE conference on 'Supporters and Football Governance', Loughborough University, 24-25 October 2014

Dialogue and Debate

Unlike typical academic events with a sequence of research papers, the FREE conference on 'Supporters and Football Governance' organised by the team of work package (WP) 8 based at Loughborough University was conceived as a space for dialogue and debate on the role of supporters in the organisation and management of football. The objective of WP leader and conference organiser Borja García, assisted by Jo Welford, Brett Smith and their efficient student helpers, was to bring together representatives from a number of stakeholders and different countries to have a genuine European debate. Examples of good (and bad) practices were analysed to move forward the attempts to improve the governance of football through the integration of the fans.

The conference clearly met the expectations. It brought together over 60 participants from different academic, social and football backgrounds, representing a variety of organisations and opinions. The excellent infrastructure of the university also allowed the exhibition 'Whose Game is it? Football through the fans' eyes' to take place during the duration of the conference.

Based on the research work of WP8, the conference was based on the assumption that supporters are a force for the good of football and that they should have an active role in deciding how the game is governed and managed. At the same time, the conference objectives were also very clear about the fact that the participation of supporters should not go unquestioned and undebated. Supporters can play a positive role in football, but this does not mean that any policy advocating their involvement, or the goals they set, are always right by definition. Thus, the conference was designed with a critical mind around three sets of questions:

- 🕒 To what extent do supporters want to get involved in governance?
- 🕒 What examples of best practice in supporter activism can we currently find in European football?

- 🕒 What can be done to ensure inclusivity and equity in the stands?

Keynotes

'Time for reflection'

The conference was kicked off with the intervention of **Sean Hamil**, the Director of Birkbeck Sport Business Centre (Birkbeck College, University of London) and one of the leading academics on the research of supporter activism.



Under the title *'The supporter ownership model: Time for reflection'*, Sean Hamil gave a critical overview of the development of the supporters' movement over the last decade. He first reminded the audience that the private ownership model of professional football management found in most European countries does not seem to be working. It can be put into question. Indeed, despite record levels of income, it is unable to deliver benefits, and has seen a record number of insolvencies.

In his assessment Sean Hamil made it clear that 'there is no substitute to good management'. He went on to explain the concept of 'fan equity', whereby clubs with actively recognised and engaged supporters are actually worth more in simple economic terms.

He concluded his very lively presentation with a number of recommendations. Hamil stated that supporters organisations need to be more accountable and transparent to



their fellow supporters. He argued in favour of term limits for the board members of supporters' trusts. To ensure diversity, he also recommended the appointment of non-executive independent directors to these boards. With regard to the clubs and governing bodies, Sean concluded that they need to include representatives of the supporters in their decision making bodies, specially the executive board and the council of the Football Association

The Why and How of Supporter Engagement

The second day of the conference was also kicked off by a keynote lecture, given jointly Borja García and Jo Welford



(Loughborough University), together with one of the participants in WP8's research, Steve Bradbury. **Borja García** and **Jo Welford** showed that both the quantitative and qualitative research done within FREE clearly demonstrate there is a demand for further football regulation. Major concerns like the excessive commercialisation of football, the increasing disconnection between clubs and their communities, and the impression that fans in the stadiums are not valued, were widely shared across Europe.

At the same time, the research of WP8 showed willingness to engage is impeded by both personal barriers (lack of time money or proper structures) and more conceptual barriers (disagreements with the politics of the supporters' trusts movement, willingness to avoid working against their club or, quite simply, not thinking that supporter ownership is a solution).

Steve Bradbury, a lifelong supporter of Port Vale, gave a good vision of those barriers from his own experience, referring to 'volunteer burn-out'. As he said: 'at some point, we just want a benevolent dictator to own our club so we can relax and watch the football'. Bradbury admitted that

good dialogue between club and supporters goes a long way to motivate volunteers to be active, but this presupposes the club's desire to engage with their supporters.

García and Welford concluded the keynote with some concrete policy proposals in order to improve the impact supporters can make on the governance of football and provide for better opportunities of engagement.

Round tables

Frustrations

The first roundtable of the conference explored the problems of an often overlooked group of supporters: supporters with disabilities. **Jo Welford's** presentation summarised the research findings on this area. It pointed out the benefits of football for mental well-being and social inclusion. It also highlighted the numerous intellectual and physical barriers disabled supporters have to face, discussed in a roundtable debate moderated by **Brett Smith**.

Bernard Rice (Leicester City Disabled Supporters Association), **Lin Corbett** (Wolves Disabled Supporters Association) and **Ruth Hopkins** (Level Playing Field) expressed their increased frustration with the lack of cooperation from some clubs, despite the existence of guidelines. The current provisions for disabled supporters in European football appeared to be clearly insufficient. Intervening from the audience, UEFA's **William Gaillard** explained that clubs often hide behind insufficient national legislation. In the discussion, Gaillard ended up suggesting that a way forward might be to introduce provisions on disabled supporters to UEFA's club licensing system.

Alternatives

The second round table of the conference featured representatives from three football clubs that claim to be different or alternative in some way. **Adam Brown**, a founding member and director of community-owned FC United of Manchester (FCUM), admitted it is difficult to involve members in the democratic processes of the club, such as AGMs, auditing, board meetings, etc. Clearly, 'democracy is hard work!' At the same time Brown remained convinced that FCUM was undoubtedly an addition to the social capital of the metropolitan area of Manchester.



Roger Hasenbein, a member of FC St. Pauli's supervisory board, explained how the club is trapped between the need to survive in the commercial reality of the German Bundesliga and the left-wing community ethos it has developed. Speaking very openly about the conflicts that from time to time appear between the club's board and the supporters' community, Hasenbein argued that the key always lies in open dialogue and transparency.

Finally, **Jokin Garatea**, of Athletic Club Bilbao said that the club's commitment to local Basque identity in an era of increasing globalisation may be admired, but is not imitated: it is extremely hard to survive under such self-imposed conditions. A very strong identity firmly rooted in a peculiar history is necessary. Garatea's arguments triggered a lively debate, during which it was pointed out that Athletic Bilbao's manner of generating social capital also carried the risk of excluding those from outside in turn.

Parallel Sessions

Power, corruption, collective action

How do supporters react to corruption scandals in their different countries? Three case studies, from Poland, Croatia and Turkey, were presented. **Kamila Grzeskowiak** (Adam Mickiewicz University) explained how Polish supporters are fierce critics of the role of their national FA in failing to control corruption. **Loïc Tregoures** (University of Lille 2), reflected on whether recent violent incidents in the stands may create a lack of legitimacy for Croatian football fan groups when denouncing corruption scandals in their country's football. The paper, however, presented a positive assessment of the efforts from traditionally rival supporters organisations (e.g. Dinamo Zagreb and Hajduk Split) to work together. In his paper, **Emir Güney** (Kadir Has University) recalled that all sports clubs are associations in Turkey. His study suggested a hybrid model for Turkish football (i.e. a mixture of English and German models) where supporter associations are represented at the club's executive level.

Diversity in the stands

Mark Doidge (University of Brighton) presented a study of Italian Ultra groups, who have been working together across traditional political and local divides in order to challenge legislation and defend their own role in the football ground. Doidge identified two reasons that have brought together Italian Ultras: the commercialisation of football and the Italian government's measures to control

access to stadiums. In a paper addressing the diversity of the supporters movement itself, **Jayne Cauldwell** (University of Brighton) presented a small-scale ethnographic study of the experiences of Paula, a Norwich City transgender fan who found her experiences in the stands to be liberating and even empowering. A positive message, which according to Cauldwell, might deserve to be heard more often.



Single club case studies

Jim O'Brien (Southampton Solent University), presented research on the role of supporters in CA Osasuna, a small club in Spanish football's top tier that is still owned by its members. The real power in the governance of the club lay however with an 'oligarchy' that operates in close cooperation with some of the most powerful media outlets of the city. **Oswaldo Croci** (Memorial University Newfoundland) presented an analysis of the recent activism of supporters of Sambenedettese, a small semi-professional Italian club. He explained how a moment of crisis (bankruptcy) activated the supporters to get involved. For Croci the efforts of the supporters need to be (more) recognised.

In a paper on Bohemians Prague, **Dino Numerato** (Loughborough University) explained the development since 2005 of a supporters' trust which saved the club from bankruptcy. The paper was a good example of the importance of the local context in research about supporters: many of the actions of the Bohemians Prague Supporters' Trust could only be understood alongside their effort to form a political party to enter the local elections.

Engagement beyond club management

Instead of a club, **James Kewnyon** (Northampton University) focused on governance demands of supporters of national teams (England, Ireland and Armenia). Kenyon argued that the relationship between supporters and national teams is different in terms of time commitment, but



perhaps for that reason it may suit better a group of less dedicated (i.e. less active) football supporters. **Fernando Borges** (Panthéon-Assas University) presented a paper exploring the recent decision of Portuguese top club Benfica to exploit its own TV channel intensively by broadcasting its home matches only through that channel. This new model may represent a new approach to managing the club's brand: it places the club itself as the gate-keeper of its relations with the supporters.

A critical analysis of supporter activism

Andrew Jenkin (Supporters Direct Scotland) presented research done through interviews and focus groups to understand the benefits of the community ownership model of football clubs in Scotland, whilst also discussing the barriers that fans perceive to this model's success. It became clear fans were not interested in having the power per se, but rather in the stability of their club.

Based on a more theoretical approach, **David Webber** (Warwick University) used Karl Polanyi's double movement concept as a framework for explaining current movements 'against modern football' in England. Small at the outset, this movement is now gaining political prominence in England and the governing bodies of the game



should pay attention to it.

A systemic approach to football governance

Petar Ceronja (Odvjetnicko Drustvo Law Firm), analysed the legal implications of the 2006 Croatian Sports Act allowing clubs to transform their legal entity from associations to joint-stock companies. Ceronja suggested however that more clubs in Croatia and the wider Balkans should adopt a 'German' model of governance. **Radoslaw Kossakowski** (Gdansk University) looked at 3 different Polish clubs: Chrobry Glogow, Hutnik Nowa Huta and Lechia Gdansk, which, in the aftermath of financial and organisational mismanagement were all revived through fan engagement.

The oft-quoted German model was critically analysed by **Daniel Ziesche** (German Sport University Cologne). To the surprise of many, Ziesche argued that on close inspection fan-driven organisations play little to no formal role in any of the clubs' decision-making structures. This does not mean fans are neglected. The importance of consultation with the fans seemed to be very well engrained in most clubs, which may explain why the German model is so positively perceived.

A vivid concluding debate

The final session of the conference was a panel debate bringing together Daniela Wurbs (Football Supporters Europe), Ben Shave (Supporters Direct Europe), William Gaillard (UEFA), and Ryan McKnight (Independent consultant and former CEO of Stockport County's supporters' trust). While there was general agreement supporters can and should have a role in football governance, opinions on the extent of that role were diverse. **Ryan McKnight** suggested that nowadays professional football is a business and it should run as such. Fans sometimes are too focused on results and forget business managers need to take decisions with the balance books, rather than the League table, in mind, especially in small clubs. McKnight added that one of the problems of the current supporter movement may be that it is not independent enough.

On the issue of diversity and inclusion, **Ben Shave** defended the supporters' trust model as being democratic and affordable. He did not think it was inflexible and complained that sometimes supporters' organisations seem to be held to superior governance standards than other civil society organisations. From the audience, writer **David Goldblatt**

added that criticism should not be levelled at the supporters 'especially when the current private ownership system in England is clearly failing'. **Daniela Wurbs** was adamant to explain that she feels supporters' organisations are unduly criticised in that respect. She defended that it is FSE's policy to work towards diversity and inclusion of the supporters.

There was a general agreement that initiatives for better involvement of supporters are more likely to succeed if they are discussed within the framework of UEFA and applied at European level. The panellists seem to agree on the need for strong, representative and well governed national FAs as a first step to further develop the engagement of supporters. This view actually reflects some of the policy recommendations of WP8.



« We're in the final! » conference



**Findings, Insights, Recommendations from the FREE project
Committee of the Regions, Brussels**

9.00 – Registration of participants

Introduction: Scope & Objectives of the Conference

- ☉ Laurent Thieule (Committee of the Regions)
- ☉ Philippe Keraudren (European Commission, DG Research)

10.00 – Introductory keynote: 'Football's evident and hidden policy relevance'

- ☉ Albrecht Sonntag (ESSCA School of Management, FREE project coordinator)

10.30-10.45 – Coffee Break

Session 1: Still a Man's Game? Challenges for Women in Football in Europe

10.45 – Presentation of research findings: 'Still a Man's Game?'

- ☉ Introduction by Gertrud Pfister
(University of Copenhagen & FREE Project)

11.15 – Roundtable discussion on female fans and women's football in Europe

- ☉ Brigitte Henriques
(General Secretary of the French Football Federation)
 - ☉ Alexandre Mestre (President of the 'Women and Sport'
network of Sport and Citizenship)
 - ☉ Sandra Schwedler
(President of the Board of FC Sankt Pauli)
 - ☉ Stacey Pope (Researcher, Durham University)
 - ☉ Marie-Luise Klein (Researcher, Ruhr-University Bochum)
- Debate moderated by David Ranc
(ESSCA School of Management & FREE Project)

12.00 – Buffet lunch

Session 2: Whose Game Is It?

13.15 – Presentation of research findings 'Whose Game Is It?'

- ☉ Introduction by Borja García
(Loughborough University & FREE Project)

13.45 – Roundtable discussion on stake- holders & governance of European football

- ☉ William Gaillard (Special Advisor to the President, UEFA)
- ☉ Zenon Severis (European Commission, sports unit)

- ☉ Dariusz Łapiński (Polish Football Association)
 - ☉ Heidi Thaler (Koordinationsstelle Fanprojekte, Frankfurt)
- Debate moderated by Jürgen Mittag
(German Sport University Cologne)

14.45-15.00 – Coffee break



Session 3: The Public Sphere of European Football

15.00 – Presentation of research findings on the public sphere of European football

- ☉ Introduction by Özgehan Şenyuva
(Middle East Technical University & FREE Project)

15.30 – Roundtable discussion on FREE findings from anthropological, historical and political research on European football:

- ☉ Football and European integration:
a public sphere of a different kind
- ☉ A common memory in the making: football's cultural heritage
- ☉ Commonality and diversity:
the continental fault lines of European football
- ☉ Football, migration and flexible identities:
fluid communities and loyalties
- ☉ Football's continental mega events:
recommendations for the future

Debate moderated by Albrecht Sonntag
(ESSCA School of Management & FREE Project)

16.30-17.00 – Conclusion and Outlook

- ☉ Jonathan Michael Hill
(Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Tibor Navracsics)

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Soon in your bookshelf: the Palgrave Macmillan FREE book series

Interview with Harriet Barker Commissioning Editor at Palgrave Macmillan Publishers

In 2014, Harriet Barker took over as commissioning editor for sociology at Palgrave Macmillan, the renowned London-based global academic publishing house. She is in charge of the forthcoming book series 'Football Research in an Enlarged Europe', based on the work of the FREE project and scheduled to be launched in 2015.

An entire book series based on football research – that's an innovative initiative in international academic publishing. What motivated Palgrave Macmillan to take this step?

Football is one of the most popular and celebrated sports in the world, affecting business, economics, media, culture and society. Though the series focuses on football as a specific sport, it considers a broad range of issues from social change and memory, to gender, public space and politics.

We already have a strong publishing reputation in sports sociology, particularly in the area of Olympic studies, and wanted to further extend our outreach in this field. The goals of the 'Football in an Enlarged Europe' network were very fitting for a series, dedicated to understanding football as a phenomenon through a range of disciplines.

What potential do you see for this research area in the next years? How many titles do you expect within this series?

With the rise of women's football, mega-events such as the UEFA Champions League and the political implications of the World Cup in Qatar in 2022, football continues to be a dynamic phenomenon which has international relevance and garners significant media attention.

I hope that the series will address a large variety of issues that will mark the future of the game, including sexuality and diversity, and become the go-to interdisciplinary forum for scholarly work on football.

The series already has a wealth of projects lined up and we hope to publish approximately three each year, expanding the series over time to become as global and wide-reaching as possible.

Where does production stand right now? Can you already let us know when the first batch of three books will be published?

The first three books are currently in production: *European Football and Collective Memory* edited by Wolfram Pyta and Nils Havemann, *Spanish Football and Social Change* by Ramón Llopis-Goig, and *The European Football Championship – Mega-Event and Vanity Fair* edited by Basak Alpan, Alexandra Schwell and Albrecht Sonntag. They are due to publish in March, May and August 2015 respectively, which will be a fantastic start to the first year of the series.

On a more personal note: with a university background in poetry and literature studies, are you actually interested in football?

I am admittedly not a football expert and more likely to be found curled up with a cup of tea and a book, but I happily get involved when England are playing in international tournaments. And my partner is certainly a devoted Manchester United fan!

What I really like about the series is how football is considered through different perspectives – from fan's experiences to national identity, from the spaces football inhabits to sport as development.



The editorial board includes **Richard Giulianotti**, Loughborough University (UK) – **David Goldblatt**, Open University (UK) – **Geoff Hare**, Newcastle University (UK) – **Patrick Mignon**, Insep (FR) – **Peter Millward**, Liverpool John Moores University (UK) – **Jürgen Mittag**, Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln (DE) – **Arne Niemann**, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz (DE) – **Stacey Pope**, Durham University (UK) – **Kay Schiller**, Durham University (UK) – **Geoff Pearson**, University of Manchester (UK)



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News from the Network

Our civil society partner, the think tank **Sport and Citizenship** has dedicated the new issue (29) of its review to the conclusions of the FREE project. These results will be presented during our one day event at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels on 17 March: « We're in the Final! ». This issue of the Sport and Citizenship Review is available [on the FREE website](http://www.free-project.eu) (free-project.eu).



Joanna 'Jo' Welford published a book with friend of the FREE project Carrie Dunn: *Football and the FA Women's Super League Structure, Governance and Impact*. It is available as part of the Palgrave Pivot series.

Nina Szogs took part in a roundtable discussion in Vienna: Club 2 x 11 - Die Fußballdiskussion 'Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe oder Galatasaray?' on 5 March, 2015 with **Tamir Bora**, member of the FREE scientific advisory board, Muhammet Akagiündüz & Faruk Çelebi. The discussion was chaired by Klaus Federmaier <http://www.club2x11.at/>.

Nina Szogs published 'Emotionen/Körper/Sinne und der Fußballraum. Methodische Zugänge zu einer Fenerbahçe-Kneipe in Wien' in: M. L. Arantes & E. Rieger (eds.), *Ethnologien der Sinne. Wahrnehmung und Methode in empirisch-kulturwissenschaftlichen Forschungen*. (Bielefeld: Transcript), pp. 251-268.

Svenja Mintert gave an interview on watching football and its effect on grassroots players for the Danish Football Association Jutland (DBU Jylland). The interview can be found [on the site of the football association](#) and on [Sporten TV 2](#).

Unesco, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, has commissioned **Albrecht Sonntag** and the EU-Asia Institute at ESSCA School of Management to write a report on Discriminations in Football with a specific focus on the ways to fight discrimination. The results are expected to be disseminated in the Summer.

Nina Szogs also presented two papers: 'Vienna, Istanbul, Europe. Translocal Strategies of Soccer Fans

Abroad' on the panel: The Politics of the Pitch: Anthropological Encounters with Soccer at the American Anthropological Association 2014 Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. And 'Werkstattgespräch: Migrating Football Fan Identities' at the Department of European Ethnology, University of Vienna.

FREE coordinator **Albrecht Sonntag** took part in Sport and Citizenship's radio show 'Sport Corner' with Belgian MEP **Marc Tarabella**. Presented by **Sport and Citizenship's** president Laurent Thieule, the show was recorded at the European Parliament in Strasbourg & is available on [YouTube](#).

David Ranc was invited to Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona to be the vocal (external) examiner for the PhD of Hibai López González for a thesis based on paper publications and simply entitled: 'On Mediasport Consumption'. The PhD was awarded with the maximum grade: *Cum Laude*.

The programme of the 8th World Congress on Science and Football organised by FREE partner the Copenhagen University is now available here: <http://wcsrf2015.ku.dk/>. **Gertrud Pfister** and **Albrecht Sonntag** are part of the scientific committee.

The 10th conference of the Association for the Study of Sport and the European Union (Sport&EU) will be hosted on 25 and 26 June 2015 by the coordinating institution of the FREE project, **ESSCA School of Management** on its main campus in Angers. The conference will celebrate a second anniversary: Bosman at 20 and also look ahead to the future development of EU sports policy under article 165 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

The Loughborough 'Whose Game is it?' exhibition on the results of FREE's Work Package 8 led by Borja García-García was on show at the [National Football Museum in](#)



[Manchester](#) between January & March 2015. On Wednesday 18 March, the exhibition will open at the Belraymont in Brussels. It will then move to Bilbao.

Issue 7 – v1 – 2015 03 10

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