

The organisation of football in Europe

Contact details

Name author(s): Hallgeir Gammelsæter (1) & Benoît Senaux (2)

Institution(s) or organisation(s): Molde University College (1); Reims Management School (2)

City and country: Molde, Norway (1); Reims, France (2)

Email address for correspondence: Hallgeir.Gammelsater@hiMolde.no ;
benoit.senaux@reims-ms.fr

Aim of paper and research questions

Despite its booming popularity across Europe and further, today questions can be asked about the sustainability of professional football. From the end of the 19th century football spread as pastime and basically a non-profit and amateur sport (Eisenberg, 2003), but ironically perhaps, through its gradual conversion towards professionalism and, in the last three decades, commercial business, football in Europe has moved from being non-profit to being not-profit (Lago et al., 2006).

Although football is a sport of which much is being reported and written, we can still claim that it is an area of life of which we have not much knowledge, at least from a scientific point of view. In particular, we think, this is true for the way it is organised and managed, at the national level as much as the international and transnational.

The aim of this paper is therefore, as a first step, to present an extensive literature review and discussion on organisational theoretical perspectives that can be used to understand changes in the organisation of football across Europe. Central in this respect will be perspectives on transnational regulation (cf. Djelic & Sahlin-Andersson, 2006) and the development of organisational fields (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991), but also perspectives that highlight the local responses to global trends. Hence this paper will suggest theories and concepts by which we can understand the evolution of the organisation of football across Europe over the last decades.

Literature review

The recent developments of European football can be studied against the idea of the constitution of an expanding transnational organisational field (Djelic & Sahlin Anderson, 2006; Djelic & Quack, 2008) in which there are a growing number of actors interacting to transform or defend logics and institutions within the game. Whilst the constitution of organisational fields has been ascribed the propensity for homogenisation processes in organisational structure and management (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), others highlight the robustness of national institutions (e.g. Whitley & Kristensen, 1996), the coexistence of multiple institutional logics (Kratz & Block, 2008), the scope for translating and editing transnational rules, ideas or innovations in the process of dissemination (e.g. Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996), or for strategic manoeuvring when the institutional contexts appear multiple or incoherent (e.g. Oliver, 1991). Moreover, studies of Europeanisation indicate that there is considerable margin for domestic diversities in national policy-making (e.g. Héritier et al., 2001), and reviews about the patterns of the diffusion of sport has revealed a dynamic interchange between the local, national and global – hence creating “diminishing contrasts and increased varieties” (Maguire, 2002: 363).

This literature review, and the identification of relevant organisational studies perspectives, will be structured around the existing literature describing the recent evolution of the organisation of football across Europe. This shows that top football historically has been organised very differently across Southern, Central and Northern Europe as well as across the West and the East of the region. At the same time the collapse of the iron curtain dividing the East and the West in Europe; the formation and gradual extension of the European Union and the European

market; the Bosman ruling in 1995 that forced UEFA to abide with EU law on the issue of worker mobility; and the transformation of the broadcasting media in European countries are path-breaking processes that have vastly changed European football, perhaps in the direction of convergence in its organisation and management (e.g. Amara et al., 2005; Ascari & Gagnepain, 2006; Brand & Niemann, 2007; Gammelsæter & Jakobsen, 2008; Gammelsæter, 2009; García & Rodríguez, 2003; Hare, 2003; Hoehn & Szymanski, 1999; Holt, 2007; Lago, Simmons & Szymanski, 2006; Levermore & Budd, 2004; Morrow, 2003; Senaux, 2008; Wilkesmann & Blutner, 2002).

Research design and proposed data analysis

N/A (review paper)

Discussion of progress

The theoretical perspectives developed in this paper should help future research to identify patterns in the organisational development of European football over the last decades and to analyse these changes, but this would obviously need more empirical / descriptive work.

Still, we think the theoretical perspectives developed in this paper will be useful to translate and discuss empirical findings from future studies on the recent evolutions of football, and to provide explanations for the development that we can see in European football.

Finally, we discuss the contribution of organisation theory in understanding the development of football in Europe and the future of European football.

References

- Amara, M., Henry, I., Liang, J., & Uchiumi, K. (2005). The Governance of Professional Soccer: Five case studies: Algeria, China, England, France and Japan. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 5(4), 189-206.
- Ascari, G., & Gagnepain, Ph. (2006). Spanish Football. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 7(1), 76-89.
- Brand, A., & Niemann, A. (2007). Europeanisation in the Societal/Trans-National Realm: What European Integration Studies Can Get Out Of Analysing Football. *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 3(3), 182-201.
- Czarniawska, B., & Sevón, G. (1996). *Translating Organizational Change*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- DiMaggio, P., & Powell, W.W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutionnal isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 147-160.
- Djelic, M.-L., & Quack, S. (2008). Institutions and Transnationalization. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*. Sage.
- Djelic, M.-L., & Sahlin-Andersson, K. (2006). *Transnational Governance. Institutional Dynamics of Regulation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eisenberg, C. (2003). From England to the World: The spread of Modern Soccer Football 1863-2000. *Moving Bodies*, 1, 7-22.
- Gammelsæter, H. (2009). The organization of professional football in Scandinavia. *Soccer & Society*, 10(3-4), 305-323.
- Gammelsæter, H., & Jakobsen, S.-E. (2008). Models of Organization in Norwegian Professional Soccer. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 8(1), 1-25.
- García, J., & Rodríguez, P. (2003). From Sport Clubs to Stock Companies: The Financial Structure of Football in Spain, 1992-2001. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 3, 253-269.
- Hare, G. (2003). *Football in France: A Cultural History*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

- Héritier, A., Kerwer, D., Knill, C., Lehmkuhl, D., & Teutsch, M. (2001). *Differential Europe. New Opportunities and Constraints for National Policy-Making*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Hoehn, Th., & Szymanski, S. (1999). The Americanization of European football. *Economic Policy*, 28, 205-240.
- Holt, M. (2007). The Ownership and Control of Elite Club Competition in European Football. *Soccer & Society*, 8(1), 50-67.
- Kraatz, M.S., & Block, E. (2008). Organizational Implications of Institutional Pluralism. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin-Andersson & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*. Sage.
- Lago, U., Simmons, R., & Szymanski, S. (2006). The Financial Crisis in European Football: An Introduction. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 7(1), 3-12.
- Laplume, A.O., Sonpar, K., & Litz, R.A. (2008). Stakeholder Theory: Reviewing a Theory That Moves Us. *Journal of Management*, 34(6), 1152-1189.
- Levermore, R., & Budd, A. (2004). *Sport and International Relations. An Emerging Relationship*. London: Routledge.
- Maguire, J. (2002). Sport and Globalization. In J. Coakley & E. Dunning (Red.), *Handbook of Sport Studies*. Sage.
- Morrow, S. (2003). *The people's game? Football, finance and society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Oliver, C. (1991). Strategic responses to institutional processes. *Academy of Management Review*, 16(1), 145-179.
- Powell, W.W., & DiMaggio, P. (1991). *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Theory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Senaux, B. (2008). A stakeholder approach to football club governance. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 4(1/2), 4-17.
- Whitley, R., & Kristensen, P.H. (1996). *The Changing European Firm: Limits to Convergence*. London: Routledge.
- Wilkesmann, U., & Blutner, D. (2002). Going Public: The Organizational Restructuring of German Football Clubs. *Soccer & Society*, 3(2), 19-37.