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Chapter 14 Conclusion: A europeanised game?

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In recent years it is common to find discourses that consider that European professional football has evolved to excessive levels of commercialisation that disregard grass-roots and traditional values. European football, with its mixture of commercial appeal and cultural values is a perfect example of the tensions between economic and social forces. Yet, much of that debate between football's commercialisation and social values tends to be based on assumptions rather than a solid knowledge base. In this volume we undertook to research the extent to which national structures of football in ten European countries have transformed in the last decades and the extent to which such transfiguration might be due to processes of europeanisation. Traditionally, the concept of europeanisation has been understood as the impact of direct EU policies on the national and subnational levels, but as we explained in the introduction, this volume also incorporates bottom-up dynamics since we consider europeanisation to be a two-way process. Similarly, we have also broadened the narrow definition of europeanisation to take into account transformations that result from the actions of European actors other than the EU, hence breaking the link between europeanisation and EU-isation. In doing that, this volume has not only investigated the transformation of European football, but also the explanatory powers of europeanisation, a concept that has proven useful in the analysis.

This concluding chapter now takes stock of the contributions to this volume. It is structured in three sections. First, we discuss the authors' finding regarding the main

transformations of European football. We do that focusing mainly on the players' market, the audiovisual market, organisational structures and general discourses/perceptions of the reality of national football in the countries analysed. The second part of the chapter categorises and discusses the dynamics and factors that have generated changes in European football. There we focus on top-down and bottom-up processes, transnational europeanisation (also known as crossloading), the role of non-EU actors and networks such as UEFA or the Champions League, globalisation/commercialisation and national and domestic factors. Finally the chapter concludes with a discussion on the concept of europeanisation and the contribution of the study of football to its development.

The new face of European football

European football is at present a different creature that it was two decades ago. The contributions to this volume clearly point out that there is not only a widespread perception of change (most often a negative perception), but also real transformations in structures. Combining common themes that appear in the majority of the chapters, national structures in European football have internationalised their players market and lifted restrictions in players transfers, in some cases going beyond what was necessary after the Bosman ruling of 1995. In organisational terms, there is a tendency to challenge the competencies of national governing bodies and even those of UEFA, especially in favour of professional football leagues, but the debate on this point is rather heterogeneous. Yet, it seems safe to affirm that European football's elite is pushing to separate as much as possible from the bottom of the pyramid.

With some exceptions (most notably Spain), the liberalisation of the players market contrasts with a strong interest in central marketing of broadcasting rights, underpinned by an argument of financial solidarity. Yet, it is also important to highlight that the relevance of television income outside the large audiovisual markets decreases notably and that, moreover, there are pressing and legitimate questions about the extent to which redistribution mechanisms are really robust to ensure the promised financial solidarity. Another particular finding is the existence of a clear and widespread sense of decline among most national competitions, including major markets such as France and Italy, when they compare in terms of both sporting and economic revenues with England and Spain.

The players market

As Parrish and Miettinen point out (2008: 49-51), following the European Court of Justice's Bosman ruling and the European Commission investigation on FIFA's international transfer system, the players market is the only sector of European professional sport that has been truly internationalised and liberalised. Other structures and markets in the sport sector remain delimited along national lines. Across the volume authors have investigated the transformation of the two main elements of the players market: nationality quotas and transfer systems. The former have featured a clear 'system transformation' across Europe, for all the countries analysed have abolished nationality barriers for, at least, EU-EEA nationals. Third country nationals from countries with an association agreement, the so-called, Kolpak players, are also recognised within the EU-EEA category either explicitly or implicitly. The changes in nationality quotas need to be categorised as acquiescence, since they have been implemented without much opposition

following the Bosman ruling and UEFA's decision to remove any mention to nationality in its competition regulations from February 1996 (Goodbody 1996).

Transfer systems have also been amended in European football as result of EU decisions. The result is also one of system transformation, for the almost feudal regulations that used to allow clubs to retain players against their have been removed. However, the transformation is less radical than in the case of nationality quotas, which perhaps brings it closer to the category of (heavy) adjustment. In this case there are two particular elements to make it different from nationality quotas. First, there is a number of countries where national factors contributed to modifications well before the Bosman case, normally due to the belligerence of footballers trade unions. England, France and Spain modified their transfer regulations in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of domestic factors. Second, the response of football bodies was slightly more confrontational, especially once the European Commission launched its investigation in 2001. It could be categorised as 'engagement/intervention', and this can explain the slightly smaller degree of transformation. Also, as explained specially in chapter four (Germany), the politicisation of the transfer system issue, with interventions from the Prime Ministers of Germany and the United Kingdom, favoured the anti-liberalising arguments of the governing bodies, hence countering europeanising forces.

The audiovisual market

The impact of the audiovisual market on European professional football, and vice versa, is a common theme to the contributions in this volume. The liberalisation of the audiovisual market in the EU favoured the creation of new private operators, whose vivid interest in live football

created a strong demand for broadcasting rights of the most important football competitions. Football stakeholders soon realised the economic potential and they were keen to exploit it, to the point that television money has become the most important revenue stream for Europe's major leagues. It has to be pointed out, however, that leagues on smaller geographical and television markets do not rely that much on broadcasting income, but on major donors or sponsorship (see for example the chapters on Austria, Switzerland or the Netherlands).

With stakeholders willing to sell their competition's broadcasting rights two main questions surface throughout the book. First, there is a debate about the ownership of the rights, for the decision as to whether clubs or governing bodies are the owners shall have important consequences in terms of power and governance structures. This is dealt with in the section below. A second point is the way in which those broadcasting rights are sold, especially in terms of (1) exclusivity for a single operator (as opposed to packages available for several TV operators) and (2) central marketing by the competition organiser (as opposed to individual selling by the clubs). It is in this matter that one can find a direct top-down intervention by the European Commission's Directorate General for Competition Policy, which started procedures to investigate the selling of broadcasting rights for the UEFA Champions League (European Commission 2001), the German Bundesliga (European Commission 2005) and the English Premier League (European Commission 2003, 2006, 2002).

The Commission's concerns were that football bodies were selling their broadcasting rights to a single operator per market for long periods, hence contributing to create de facto monopolies. The Commission also objected to the fact that few games were broadcast and that

clubs were not allowed to market unsold commercial rights. The European Commission was not against central selling prima facie, but it regarded that principle with mistrust from a legal and competitive point of view.

Yet, the response of football bodies was more firm than in the players market, as the chapters on Germany, England and, to some extent, Poland demonstrate. In response to the Commission decisions, there was a bottom-up dynamic that can be categorised as ‘engagement/intervention’, for the football bodies affected made a clear attempt to modify the adaptational pressures. However, the strength of bottom-up engagement varies across the countries studied. Larger leagues, with more resources and bigger television markets seem to be more likely to participate in these dynamics. This is further explored in the second section of these conclusions. As result of that engagement, arrangements for the sale of broadcasting rights were modified, but not to the extent of a full liberalisation as initially envisaged by the Commission. Hence the result could be categorised as (moderate) adjustment.

Thus, a pattern has emerged in European football whereby collective selling (central marketing) is accepted by competition watchdogs as long as TV rights are divided into small packages of several games that can then be sold to different operators. Such structure was accepted by the Commission in the three cases mentioned above, and the contributions in the volume point out that it has been also implemented in other countries where there was no Commission investigation (see for example the chapters on Poland and Austria).

Structures and perceptions

The final major theme of European football's transformation is, undoubtedly, the structural reorganisation whereby clubs, which used to be in the bottom of the pyramid, have branched out from the governing bodies to create professional football leagues. In the chapters included in the book there is a common feature that identifies the rise of professional clubs and the decline of national federations, that are relegated to the organisation of cup competitions, the management of the national team and amateur football. Again, there is a divide between the larger more commercial leagues, such as Spain and England, and smaller countries with smaller levels of professionalisation and commercialisation e.g. Austria, Sweden).

Yet, despite a common trend towards the creation of professional leagues, there is still some heterogeneity across the continent. There is a group of countries where the professional football league is formed by clubs in the first and second divisions(e.g. Germany). There is another group of countries where the professional football league has broken away not just from the federation, but also from the rest of professional football and, therefore, it only includes the clubs playing in the top tier (e.g. England, Netherlands, Poland). Interestingly, Italy used to belong to the former group but after recent events the clubs in Serie A want to emulate the English Premier League model and break away on their own.

Finally, another interesting finding of this book in relation to the transformation of European football is the presence of a widespread sense of decline among European leagues, both in economic and sporting terms, especially when compared to the major players, such as England and Spain. Whilst there is perhaps a more marked sense of decline in the contributions from

smaller countries (Netherlands, Sweden, Austria), it is noticeable that larger footballing nations such as Italy and France also feature similar perceptions. This perception of decline is generating, broadly speaking, two different types of reactions.

In France and Italy the perception of decline seems to be a stronger motor for structural transformation (or at least proposals for transformation). This sets in motion dynamics of transnational europeanisation, where the declining countries propose to adopt similar practices to those countries they perceive to be more successful models. Thus, in Italy the top clubs want to break away from the Serie B to concentrate on commercial revenues. In France there are proposals to modernise stadia and to adopt more commercial structures in the management of clubs. Whilst the sense of decline is as strong in smaller countries (e.g. Netherlands, Sweden, Austria), its relevance as a source of change seems to be smaller. These countries give the impression to that they are resigned to be a sort of second division of European football whilst cherishing memories of the past. The smaller countries concentrate on arguing that the size of their markets does not allow them to compete with the larger leagues. Thus, the smaller countries are engaged in requesting regulations to ensure a European wide level playing field¹ or exploring the possibilities to create transnational leagues with other countries (see the chapters on the Netherlands or Sweden).

Ironically, whilst the English and Spanish models are considered successful abroad, national opinion in these countries is lately voicing a concern over excessive commercialisation and massive debts as both chapters explain. Spanish football has received, twice, the rescue of the state with public money and the English Premier League faces severe criticism over the

proliferation of foreign owners, among other points. In the case of England the tensions between globalisation and traditional football values seem to be particularly strong.

Sources and dynamics of change

The contributions in this volume have pointed out a clear presence of supranational factors of change, including but not limited to EU decisions, but they have also identified the importance of national particularities to impulse change or mediate supranational forces. Similarly, another interesting finding is the presence of relevant transnational dynamics. In this section we recapitulate and analyse the relevance of these sources for change. We focus first on more traditional europeanisation dynamics: top-down, bottom-up and transnational dynamics. We consider afterwards the relevance of globalisation and domestic factors.

Top-down europeanisation

Throughout this volume europeanisation has been understood as the process of change in the domestic arena resulting from the European level of governance. However, europeanisation has not been viewed as a unidirectional but as a process that develops top-down (downloading), bottom-up (uploading) and also transnationally (cross-loading).

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). This sub-section predominantly deals with EU-induced europeanisation (for UEFA europeanisation, see below). Top-down europeanisation has manifested in various ways and

forms and also involved various actors. The most prominent cases of vertical downloading are related to the Bosman case (both concerning the nationality issue and the transfer regime), and the Commission pursuits in terms of broadcasting rights. Somewhat less prominent instances of top-down europeanisation include the ECJ case law concerning nationals from countries that have signed and EU association agreement, application of the TV Without Frontiers Directive, and Commission involvement in the prevention of state support of clubs in financial difficulties.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the various chapters of this volume. The Bosman ruling (in both its aspects) has been a case of top-down europeanisation that FAs and clubs were unable to defy. All country cases indicate that the Bosman ruling was implemented without much resistance, sometimes even beyond what was strictly required (e.g. cases of Germany and Austria). There were numerous domestic responses in the aftermath but they merely attempted to mitigate the adverse repercussions of the ruling (see section on bottom-up europeanisation). Second, while the Bosman ruling generally brought about ‘system transformation’, there are some notable exceptions. Transfer regimes were already considerably liberalised in countries like France, Spain and England. Bosman thus required less substantial adjustments, particularly in France and Spain with regard to transfer rules. As for the nationality regime, a number of countries, such as France, Austria and Switzerland, were already characterised by substantially international players’ markets in the mid-1990s. As a result, the ruling ‘only’ produced (heavy) adjustments. With regard to transfer regimes it is also noteworthy that many domestic leagues in Europe witnessed a massive outflow of national players to leagues that could finance higher salaries, most substantially concerning French and Dutch players, but notable also for instance with regard to Swedish and Swiss ones.

Top-down europeanisation pressures also substantially impacted on new or non-EU Member States. In Austria, a country that joined the European Union in 1995, the implications of the ruling were swiftly implemented. In Poland the nationality regime was changed immediately upon accession in 2004, while the transfer regime had already been changed in 2001, a transformation that was amplified through membership in UEFA and FIFA. In non-EU member Switzerland the nationality aspect of the Bosman-ruling was implemented when the bilateral agreement between the EU and Switzerland on the free movement of persons came into effect in 2004. Perhaps most interestingly, in Switzerland the transfer regime was gradually changed from 1996, three years before the bilateral agreement on the free movement of persons was signed (and eight years before it took effect). Even though the Swiss Football Association was not (legally) required to react, it read the signal of the Bosman ruling in a way that the existing transfer rules could not be maintained for that much longer and thus convinced the clubs to a timely and voluntary shift to the new scheme.

Other (less prominent) instances of top-down europeanisation have made an impact on the transformation of domestic football, albeit a lesser one than the Bosman ruling. Commission action concerning broadcasting rights was targeted primarily at two domestic leagues, the English Premier League and the German Bundesliga (as well as the Champions League). However, the Commission pursuit came at a time when it was inclined to tone down its initial proactively interventionist stance, (purely) based on an EU competition policy perspective. This partially explains why these Commission actions resulted in less substantial transformations than those of the players market.

The ECJ case law concerning nationals from countries that have signed an EU association agreement does not have quite the same scope and impact as the Bosman ruling, and can also be seen as merely an extension of the logic of that ruling. The incremental approach taken by the Court (and the absence of significant trade union action in support) left the Spanish FA, for instance, with a margin of discretion to delay the process of implementing the ECJ's case law. The Commission's involvement in the prevention of state support for clubs in financial difficulties only appeared in two cases, the Italian and Dutch ones. In Italy, which constitutes the more important case in that respect, the Commission obliged the Italian government to modify the decreto salva-calcio so that amortisations would no longer provide tax advantages for football clubs. However, this could not prevent the fact that the allowed practices (coupled with other creative accounting practices) helped to save many of the top Italian football clubs and arguably reinforced elements of an 'unlevel playing field' in European football with very different levels of strictness concerning budgeting and licensing rules across countries.

In several case studies indirect forms of top-down europeanisation were identified. More indirect europeanisation pressures constituted, for instance, EU norms, invoking the threat of EU action, or the anticipation of future legal requirements. The Polish case with regard to broadcasting rights has suggested, for example, that actors were well aware of EU norms and Commission principals and policy stances in prior cases. The Commission did not intervene directly in Poland, as it did in England and Germany, but a deal between the Polish FA and Canal+ was challenged by the Polish competition authority with reference to EU law and the Commission decision in the Champions League case. Similarly, the Commission never directly

intervened in the evolution of broadcasting rights in France. Europeanisation pressures are more indirect, i.e. in the form of potential threats of legal action by the Commission that have been repeatedly invoked by the French League as a means to change the way that broadcasting rights are sold in France. In Spain the government defended its regulatory choice with regard to the broadcasting of sports events by arguing that it was (merely) implementing the TV Without Frontiers Directive. Even though the authors of the Spanish case concede that domestic factors may have played a more important role in the choice of regulatory regime, they suggest that debates in the European Parliament are likely to have influenced the decision. In terms of Switzerland, as alluded to above, it seems that – even without the existence of a bilateral agreement, or direct legal pressures – the practice of voluntary or autonomous adaptation, which has been an important source of europeanisation in Switzerland since 1992 (Church 2000), played a substantial role here. Even if the necessary adaptations emanating from the bilateral agreement on the free movement of persons – that entered into force in 2004 – were already discussed during the pre-negotiations, this would be a case of anticipated europeanisation, i.e. a decision to change the post-Bosman transfer regime eight years before this step was legally required, and thus also constitute an interesting indirect form of europeanisation.

Overall, the cases analysed indicate that top-down europeanisation pressures have played a substantial role in the transformation of European football, albeit constituting one out of several important variables, alongside transnational, domestic and global pressures. The significance of top-down europeanisation pressures are not only visible in the development of players markets, transfer regimes and broadcasting rights. On a more general note, it should also be mentioned that those authors who detected a certain decline/downward trend or lack of competitiveness of a

domestic league usually, at least in part, attributed this to top-down europeanisation pressures. This has been noted, to varying degrees, with regard to developments in the Netherlands, Italy, France and Sweden.

From an analysis across the various chapters a number of factors emerge that seem to condition the impact of top-down europeanisation. The Bosman ruling indicates that top-down europeanisation pressures can be of substantial strength when legal bindingness is combined with clear argumentation, support of some concerned parties (players' unions) and the absence of bottom-up counter-pressures during the decision making phase. The broadcasting issue, especially in England and Germany suggests that with a less assertive Commission and substantial bottom-up counter-pressures during the decision-making phase, top-down europeanisation forces could not really unfold. The ECJ case law concerning nationals from countries that have signed an EU association agreement has indicated that some lack of legal clarity (or boldness), together with an absence of sufficient attention by concerned constituencies (footballers' unions) left a margin of discretion for a reluctant FA (as in Spain) to delay the implementation process. However, cases of indirect top-down europeanisation have shown that even the absence of legally binding provisions or the absence of EU agents acting upon them, top-down europeanisation forces, albeit less forceful, can be unleashed. This suggests that the framing of beliefs and expectations can also be an effective (top-down) europeanisation trigger that should not be neglected (cf. Knill 2001; Knill and Lehmkuhl 2002). One of the most important factors conditioning top-down europeanisation, however, are bottom-up pressures that we will now turn to in more detail.

Bottom-up europeanisation

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 (i.e. top-down) 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 between the European and domestic levels for an explanation of europeanisation (processes). In our context, important groups of actors, operating bottom-up have been domestic associations, leagues, clubs, governments and the media.

Across the country case studies there have been varied responses to top-down europeanisation pressures. Here it makes sense to distinguish between the policy formulation (and decision-making) phase on the one hand, and the policy implementation phase on the other hand. As for the latter, in terms of the nationality aspect of the Bosman ruling, an element that most of the studies analysed with regard to domestic implementation, transposition has been mixed. In most countries a mixture of progressive and conservative transposition could be witnessed. In Germany, England, Italy, Austria and Poland, for example, national associations clearly went beyond the level of liberalisation that was minimally required through the ruling, usually by progressively lifting restrictions concerning non-EU foreigners. At the same time, the football associations in these countries have put in place counter-measures to foster the development of national (or home-grown) players. In Austria, there have also temporarily been elements of ‘evasion’ of, or ‘escape’ from, the Bosman ruling with the gentlemen’s agreement on the so-called ‘9+9 rule’.

On the level of policy formulation very different bottom-up responses to top-down europeanisation pressures have been described in the cases studies. A good share of domestic reactions have been characterized as ‘acquiescence’, i.e. where actors simply accepted the changes stemming from europeanisation, as in the cases of Poland (in terms of top-down europeanisation generally), Sweden (media responses to top-down europeanisation), Spain (with regard to the Bosman ruling), and Austria (concerning the Bosman transfer regime and broadcasting rights). At the same time, a number of studies have also revealed that top-down europeanisation may be answered through ‘engagement’ with European level pressures (especially by the bigger countries/leagues). The leagues/associations in England and Germany engaged EU institutions with regard to the issue of broadcasting rights. In Germany, ‘engagement’ was also the bottom-up reaction concerning the evolution of the transfer regime. This has also been the case in Italy, where the smaller clubs reacted towards the removal of transfer fees for out-of-contract players. Occasionally, engagement with EU institutions resembled ‘confrontation’, but usually more in tone than in substance. In the Swedish case, another category – that we hitherto did not specify or hypothesised for – i.e. ‘ignorance/unawareness’, has been chosen to describe aspects of the bottom-up reaction in Sweden.

It is interesting to note that the newer Member States’ reactions to top-down europeanisation have been largely characterized by ‘acquiescence’. The dominant view in Poland seems to have been that national football associations and leagues had rather limited capacity to influence the decisions stemming from European level pressures. Similarly, the analysis

concerning the post-Bosman phase in Austria also suggests that its status as a newcomer to the EU – with limited expertise, resources and contacts on the European level – has contributed to its rather passive response to such pressures.

Another interesting phenomenon that has emerged from the empirical analysis in various chapters is that bottom-up reactions to top-down europeanisation pressures have not always encountered the latter dynamic. This has not only occurred in terms of the partly progressive implementation of the Bosman nationality regime through several FAs. In addition, there have been processes of indirect europeanisation that have often been fostered by domestic actors (rather than directly through EU institutions). These domestic actors operated in Poland, France, Spain and Switzerland on the basis of EU norms or the anticipation of future legal requirements and thus (indirectly) spurred europeanisation processes.

All in all, the interplay between top-down and bottom-up pressures can explain much of the overall europeanisation process. Bottom-up processes often mitigate or counter top-down processes. This in turn determines much of the level of europeanisation (and thus much of the level of change). The flawed or weak bottom-up responses in the Netherlands, Italy (and to some extent also in France) have been held responsible for the (perceived) downward trends of these domestic leagues after Bosman, especially in terms of their (sporting and/or financial) competitiveness. However, we need to go beyond the interplay of top-down and bottom-up europeanisation pressures. For a full(er) understanding of europeanisation, transnational forces (cross-loading) also have to be taken into account. The role of UEFA and UEFA club competitions are particularly relevant in that respect.

Transnational europeanisation

Apart from top-down (downloading) and bottom-up (uploading) accounts of europeanisation, we highlighted in the introduction the possible relevance of the societal/trans-national dimension of europeanisation. This transnational dimension of europeanisation encapsulates two elements: (1) the level and sphere of change; (2) the type of agency generating or resisting change. Hence by the societal dimension we focus, on the one hand, on the fact that regulation and jurisdiction from Brussels is likely to induce some adaptational pressure not only at the political level but also in societal contexts, which in this case is the realm of football. On the other hand, to speak of a trans-national dimension of europeanisation aims at capturing some trends, which can be traced in analysing how societal actors are either re-acting towards attempts of regulation by the EU or creating transnational spaces that in turn impact on the governance of football.

While not diverging from a common definition of 'transnationalism', our concept also encompasses actors that have been less analysed in the current literature which heavily focuses on either non-profit NGOs or profit-driven multinational corporations. We have defined transnational actors as societal actors in a broad sense, who coordinate their actions with societal actors from other national contexts in Europe, thereby creating common, trans-national reactions towards EU institutions and/or creating trans-national institutions. Transnationalism within Europe therefore rests on transboundary networks of actors, whose interests and perceptions are either aggregated or amalgamated within these networks and institutions. Transnational governance networks across countries have undoubtedly preceded the europeanisation processes described in this book. That is, there are transnational sports bodies - such as UEFA (founded in

1954) and its global counterpart, the International Football Federation (FIFA, founded in 1909) - formed of delegates from national associations. However, as this volume will indicate, transnational europeanisation processes since the 1990s have induced a new quality of transnational agency.

To speak of a 'societal/transnational dimension' of europeanisation in the end means to pay tribute to the interrelatedness of the sphere of change and the type of agency: football as a societal sphere is characterised by a growing transnationalisation. In the contributions of this volume we have identified three main elements where transnational dynamics have contributed to transformation of national football structures. These are (1) transnational benchmarking (also labelled as cross-loading), (2) the rules and regulations of UEFA, European football's governing body, and (3) the participation in European club competitions. We now analyse each one in turn.

Cross-loading

Traditional approaches to europeanisation have mainly focused on the direct top-down effect of EU policies on national structures and the subsequent reaction of the latter. In the introduction we suggested that the analysis of football could contribute to the conceptual development of europeanisation with the analysis of transnational dynamics, which have been labeled as cross-loading. There are numerous examples in the chapters, but it is in France where this phenomenon has been better articulated with official policy documents that clearly analyse the adoption of foreign standards in areas such as safety, commercialisation or broadcasting. The case of Italy is also interesting, where the solution to the perceived decline of the national competition is to adopt the structural model of the English Premier League, which is thought to be an example of

successful sporting and economic management. Similarly, small countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden or Poland (the latter having to build football's modern structures from scratch after the collapse of the Iron Curtain) are also trying to apply, with varied success, the so-called Premier League model.

Transnational benchmarking is especially challenging for the conceptual articulation of europeanisation, since it defies much of the analytical tools identified in the introduction. The empirical evidence points towards the importance of external models as sources of europeanisation, but they are not legally binding decisions. The strength of this process lies in the perception of failure that actors have about their own national system and, of course, also in the perception of external models as being successful. This is clear when one compares the criticism suffered by the English model within the United Kingdom as explained by Wyn Grant to the positive perception of the same structure in countries such as Italy. The process of cross-loading has a component of socially constructed reality, which is sustained in some cases with a selection of studies and empirical data (e.g. France). This socially constructed reality tends also to conceal the negative consequences of the successful external model (e.g. Italy, Poland, that do not pay attention to some negative trends of the English model they want to follow). The role of beliefs and ideas was already identified in the top-down and bottom-up Europeanisation and the analysis of cross loading confirms their importance. In this respect, there appears to be a difference between the adoption of external models that are nonetheless culturally familiar (e.g. Austria and Germany) and those that might be perceived as being rather remote, either in cultural or geographical terms (e.g. England and France). The former are less likely to cause controversies, whilst the latter will face a stronger contestation.

In general we can conclude from the cases in the volume that crossloading dynamics are most likely to have a transformative impact when there is a consensus among stakeholders about the perceived failure of the national system, hence the need to 'do something'. Transnational benchmarking will also be favoured when there is an actor (or group of actors) championing the adoption of the external model. This was the case, for example, of the Spanish professional players association that argued for the abolition of the retain and transfer system in Spain following similar movements in England and France with very effective results, as the chapter explains.

UEFA, a europeanised motor of change

UEFA, as European football's governing body has played a significant role in the transformation of the game's national structures whilst, at the same time, it has been subject to europeanisation itself, as pointed out by Jonathan Hill in his contribution. Two factors contribute to UEFA's central position in the transformation of European football. First, UEFA as the governing body for football is in a superior hierarchical position over national federations, national leagues and clubs. According to the UEFA statutes, the governing body's decisions are of mandatory implementation for those in the national level under its authority. This reflects the traditional pyramid of sport governance described in the so-called European model of sport. The power and authority of UEFA have been greatly reduced and diffused over the last decade, especially as a result of many of the cases analysed in the book such as Bosman, the G-14 or the selling of Champions League broadcasting rights, and football's governance in Europe resembles now more a horizontal network rather than the traditional hierarchical pyramid (García 2007).

However, despite the structural transformation, UEFA retains a degree of centrality within the network (Holt 2007). Hence, the impact of its policies and decisions at national level remains significant. Second, UEFA is positioned as a natural partner in dialogue for the European institutions. It is a body that can claim to be representative of football across the whole EU (whether football stakeholders accept UEFA's representative function is debatable but outside the scope of this discussion). Jonathan Hill pointed out in his contribution that UEFA is a European body in nature, very much like the EU institutions. The European Commission has traditionally preferred to engage in dialogue with non-governmental organisations that have an European dimension. As such, UEFA is in almost daily contact with EU institutions and it filters down to the national and local levels the requests, demands or suggestions of European institutions. Given its central governance position and its European nature, UEFA has contributed to transformation from two different dimensions: Creating the force for transformation itself and transmitting the europeanising dynamics generated by EU decisions.

Given the hierarchical position of UEFA, its decisions have the potential to create a direct adjustment in national football structures. Through the contributions of this volume, there are mainly three UEFA decisions that the authors have found to be significant motors of change. One decision directly linked to financial transformation and sporting performance is the creation of the Champions League, but this is analysed below. The remaining two cases are the so-called home grown players rules and the UEFA licensing system. Jonathan Hill explains at length in his contribution the origin of the home grown players rule, which is directly linked to the perceived negative effects of the liberalisation of the players market after the Bosman ruling. The rule only

applied in principle to those clubs playing European competitions, but UEFA recommended national federations and leagues to apply similar criteria in their respective domestic competitions. UEFA decided not to impose the rule at national level (Edgar 2005), but it opened the door for a possible transformation. The responses at national level have been diverse. In the case of England, for example, the Premier League was opposed to the rule, deciding not to implement it for the domestic championship. Indeed, Premier League clubs were among the very few dissenting stakeholders during the consultation period prior to UEFA's adoption of the home grown players rules. Top English clubs such as Manchester United and Arsenal were not satisfied with the adoption of the regulations, referring to them as 'misguided' (Hughes 2005). In contrast, other countries such as Poland, embraced UEFA's proposal from the first moment and applied them without problems to their domestic competition in a movement that can be categorised as system adjustment. Interestingly, the opposition of the Premier League faded away and in 2010 the English clubs decided to apply these rules to their own competition from the 2010-2011 season.

The second case that has been analysed in the contributions to this volume is that of the UEFA licensing system, a scheme devised by the governing body to ensure that clubs are run to a set of minimum management standards. Again, UEFA devised the licensing system with a clear component of subsidiarity, for the implementation is left to national FAs and it only applies to clubs participating in European competitions. Yet, the initiative has had europeanising effects in some cases. The contribution on Poland is perhaps the best example, since the national FA designed a similar scheme in the professionalisation and commercialisation of their league. Moreover, the European Commission White Paper on Sport identified the UEFA licensing

system as an example of good practice in sport (European Commission 2007), suggesting that similar structures could be adopted not just in football at national level, but also in other sports.

From these examples, it is clear that UEFA, as European football's governing body, has the potential to be a source of europeanisation. This justifies the inclusion of what we have called the transnational/societal realm in the study of europeanisation, as organisations other than the EU also have the potential to instigate transformation of structures and policies at national level. In the cases analysed in the volume the decisions of UEFA have led to some system adjustment, but with different intensity from country to country. This can be explained to a large extent through the different reaction of national stakeholders, which goes from the opposition to acquiescence. It is also necessary to note that in the last years UEFA decisions do not have such a strong vertical authority, as they take the principle of subsidiarity much more into account. Despite its centrality in the governance network of European football, UEFA has lost a degree of power in favour of new stakeholders and this is reflected in the weaker europeanising effect of its decisions. UEFA decisions are more likely to have a europeanising impact (reflected in system transformation) when they are aligned with the national stakeholders' preferences (e.g. licensing system) or with ongoing political/societal discourses (e.g. homegrown players, where English clubs finally accepted UEFA's rules).

The ongoing discussion suggests that UEFA's impact in the transformation of football should not be neglected, but on the other hand the emergence of new stakeholders in football governance have weakened the direct europeanising effects of UEFA policies and decisions. However, the contributions in this volume point out that UEFA has played a second role in the

Europeanisation of football, and it is perhaps even more important. UEFA has amplified the impact of EU decisions that affected football structures. This is especially evident in the cases of nationality quotas and the transfer system, which we have labelled Bosman I and Bosman II. In terms of nationality quotas, for example, the Bosman ruling only applied to EU-EEA nationals, however UEFA decided to drop all reference to nationality, effectively scrapping nationality quotas for European club competitions. National FAs and leagues were of course legally obliged by the ruling to modify their nationality quotas as well and many of those analysed in this volume followed UEFA's decision to go beyond what was required by the ruling. In this case UEFA's decision helped to amplify the consequences of the ECJ ruling in terms of intensity. The transformation of the system went beyond what was required. Furthermore, UEFA's decision on nationality quotas applied to all 53 national FAs, including national federations from countries outside the EU such as Russia, Ukraine or Belarus to name a few. Another example of this was Poland's adoption at national level of the modifications in the transfer system negotiated between the Commission, FIFA and UEFA. That decision was taken in 2001, when Poland was not yet an EU Member State.

Thus, UEFA has the potential to amplify the Europeanising effects of EU decisions both in terms of intensity and geographical scope. Again, it is logical to expect that the strength of UEFA's Europeanising powers is bigger when it is aligned with preferences at national level or when the issue at stake is of relatively low salience.

The role of European club competitions

In terms of UEFA club competitions especially the Champions League (CL) has played a role in transnational europeanisation. Once established – mainly through the pressure exerted by big European clubs and media groups to expand European club-level competition in order to exploit its commercial potential – the Champions League has itself become a source of europeanisation. The Champions League has turned into an important focal point for the more (or most) competitive clubs across European football leagues. This development has been spurred by the very substantial financial benefits of CL participation, the high media exposure of the Champions League, the (positive) development of the CL-brand, and (largely as a result of the previous two factors) the gains in prestige that are associated with CL participation.

However, one has to differentiate between different countries and leagues. While among the big national leagues the CL has become an important revenue stream and source of prestige even in the financially most potent and perhaps sportingly most competitive domestic league, the English Premier League, in other big leagues the Champions League has become even more of a focal point. In Germany, for example, due to the comparatively less lucrative domestic TV marketing conditions, CL participation is even more important for the top clubs than for their English, Spanish or Italian rivals in order to stay competitive on the European level. And in Italy, the advent of the Champions League and more attractive UEFA club competitions more generally, reportedly brought about an important new element of competitive interest into a league that has been perceived as declining and notably witnessed waning spectators' interest. Variations of this argument could be made, to different degrees also for other leagues.

As for the smaller leagues, here the CL usually remains an ‘exception’, or even a ‘distant dream’, also for the more competitive clubs, as the studies on Austria, Sweden and Switzerland have indicated. When qualifying for the Champions League this amounts to ‘winning the jackpot’. For example, revenues generated by Sturm Granz in 2000-1 or FC Zürich in 2009-10 through participating in the CL were higher than the entire average annual budgets in their respective leagues. Yet, to count on participation in the CL group stage can be a very risky undertaking for clubs in the smaller leagues. The examples of FC Tirol or Helsingborgs IF have underlined that. Investments to either qualify for or stay in the Champions League can backfire, especially if sporting success, i.e. CL qualification, cannot be achieved or clubs’ accelerated expenditures cannot be sustained otherwise. In addition, participation in the Champions League could often not be translated into sustained sporting success, as the examples of FC Thun or Sturm Graz have demonstrated. However, also the UEFA Cup/Europa League can be financially lucrative to clubs of the smaller national leagues, as the example of Austria Vienna (that reached the UEFA-Cup quarter-final in 2004-5) has shown. However, in that competition – more than in the CL where participation in the group stage is already rewarded with very significant revenues – financial gains have been linked to how far a club got in the competition. With the recent establishment of the Europa League in 2009, this has changed to some extent, since appearance in the group stage of this competition – for which clubs however still have to qualify – is more lucrative than for the old UEFA Cup group stage. However, as the Austrian case has suggested, for most of the more competitive clubs of the smaller leagues participation even in the UEFA Cup/Europa League is only an extra/bonus rather than a normal undertaking to be relied upon in the regular calculations/budgets of these clubs.

There is another aspect (explicitly mentioned or alluded to in the chapters of this volume), which is fostered by UEFA club competitions (and by the increase of foreign-born players following from Bosman): the potential development of a ‘European public space’ (Brown 2000: 142). It has been noted that in contrast to processes on the level of elites, the general public is still for the most part inward-looking in terms of European integration. As noted by Kohler-Koch (2002: 6), language barriers, strong national or local identities and traditions hold back the development of such a transnational public space. The argument here is that football plays an important role in forming allegiances and identities at the national, local and supranational level, as it draws on an emotional investment by the supporter (Brown 2000). If football is indeed an important expression of supporters’ (collective) identities, cultural diversities could be given a more positive expression through football, and more ‘European’ allegiances could be reinforced. If fans’ teams are increasingly composed of foreign-born players, this is likely to challenge existing identity patterns. As noted by *The Economist*, ‘over the past decade European football teams have turned into a living, breathing embodiment of European integration’ (*The Economist*, 2003: 55). Such tendencies are arguably reinforced by high audience quotas of Champions League games and the positive imagery and brand as well as high status attached to European-level competitions more generally.

Globalisation

A standard analysis of globalisation in the EU suggests that it mediates the worst effects of the phenomenon for its citizens by offering them various forms of social protection. The position is, of course, more complex than that as the EU has a rather Janus-faced approach to globalisation, with the single market facilitating the operations of multinational companies. In the case of

football, however, it is Europe that is the single most important globalising force. Europe contains the leading football teams in the world with the largest revenues, attracting the biggest crowds and securing worldwide television audiences and brand recognition. As a consequence, talented footballers from Africa and Latin America are attracted to join European clubs by the higher wages on offer, leading to a negative effect on domestic competitions in the exporting countries. It is the major leagues in countries such as Britain, France, Italy and Spain that particularly attract overseas talent, but it is not absent from less wealthy competitions such as that in Poland. These developments are consistent with interpretations of globalisation which see it as a marginalising rather than an integrating force.

Globalisation and neo-liberalism are not identical, but they are closely related. Neo-liberalism privileges markets which are seen as at their most effective when they are unencumbered by forms of state intervention. It would be possible to have neo-liberalism in one country, but it would be less effective than an economy run on neo-liberal lines that was integrated with other economies run in a similar way. One of the characteristics of neo-liberalism is that one of its core assertions are that any one economic sector is like any other: it should be run on market principles and not allowed to create privileged arrangements that run contrary to those principles.

This doctrine poses challenges for the organisation of football. The playing of football originated as an amateur activity and elements of this approach have persisted more strongly in some countries in others, see the chapter on Sweden in this volume. In Britain the game became professionalised and commercialised more quickly than elsewhere, but other countries followed

variants of this model. In some countries, works teams were common, seen as a means of raising morale among the workforce and increasing their attachment to the company sponsoring the team, as well as offering its brand some publicity. In socialist states, teams were commonly sponsored by large factories or by military or even security units, see the chapter on Poland in this volume. However, whatever the particular form of organisation, a notion of community solidarity was often central to constructions of playing and watching football as an activity.

This model came under challenge from a number of directions. Cheaper and more convenient means of travel meant that fans were no longer obliged to support a local team, but could follow a more successful team some distance away. An extreme example of this is to be found in the chapter on France which notes that there are a not insignificant number of Arsenal fans in Paris and elsewhere who travel regularly to home games in England. The contribution on Sweden also is a good example of this. The development of televised football also allowed fans to develop an identification with a remote team at a young age.

Technological change has not of itself brought about globalisation, but it has made it possible. In the case of football, the development of colour television made the product more visually attractive, but it was the development of near earth satellites and the associated communications technology which permitted live games to be transmitted around the world to global audiences. Just how important this market has become is shown by the fact that the overseas rights deal secured by the English Premiership in 2010 was two-and-a-half times the value of the previous deal. Televised football has been particularly attractive to Asian markets as

a game that offers a variety of gambling opportunities before and during the course of the game and which is seen to be generally immune to match fixing.

Colin Crouch has argued (2009: 395) that ‘There has always been a tension at the centre of neo-liberalism: is it about the market or about giant firms?’ He takes the position (2009: 396) that ‘dominant interpretations of neo-liberalism are in reality more concerned with the firm than the market.’ Now, of course, even Real Madrid or Manchester United constitutes a relatively small business by the standards of many sectors of the economy. Nevertheless, such leading clubs have dominant positions in terms of global fan bases and the capacity to secure television audiences and sell merchandise. They are truly global brands. This leads to recurrent conflicts between these relatively large firms and the regulatory authorities such as FIFA and UEFA who see their task to maintain the competitiveness of football and preserve its solidary characteristics.

The Bernabéu and Old Trafford are specific geographical locations that are redolent with symbolism and attract the modern equivalent of pilgrims who are happy to tour the stadium when a match is not being played. But the commercial reality of the teams who play there is to be found in a virtual electronic sphere that is only limited by the capacity of potential viewers to receive matches meaning that many parts of Africa and rural Asia remain relatively untapped markets. There are also cultural barriers that limit the spread of football as the prime sporting entertainment, e.g., the popularity of cricket in the Indian sub-continent or of a range of ‘American’ sports in the US and Canada. There are limits to the cultural globalisation of football.

Many of the chapters in this volume do not even mention globalisation. This is not an oversight: it reflects the reality of the position. Europeanisation, in its various forms, remains a stronger shaping force. However, that does not mean that globalisation, particularly in its ideological guise as neo-liberalism, is irrelevant. It may, however, manifest itself by an indirect route, the process of ‘Anglicisation’ referred to in the chapter on Italy. This possibility is considered in the section below.

National/domestic factors

One conclusion that emerges from our study is that the national level still matters. This should not come as such a great surprise in a game like football which is an important reinforcer of national, but also sub-national and city identities. World class cities, or those that aspire to be, need world class football teams, in Europe at least, and their presence in cities like Barcelona, Milan, Manchester and Munich gives cities which are not capitals of their country a global footprint.

It should not be a surprise that national circumstances refract the influences exerted by Europeanisation and globalisation. The population and economic circumstances of a country influence the kind of football it can sustain. One would not expect the same level of competition in Iceland, Luxembourg or Malta as in Britain, Germany or Spain. Intermediate cases can be more variable. The Netherlands has been able to punch above its weight in club and international competitions, although less so than in the recent past. France has sometimes punched below its weight, at least in terms of club football. The historical legacy of a particular country exerts an enduring influence. Just as there are varieties of capitalism so there are varieties of football. The

amateur tradition persisted for a long time in Sweden while Poland has not found it easy to eradicate the problem of corruption.

However, national differences are not simply domestic in their implications. Different countries offer different models of football and they may be imitated elsewhere. It is evident that Italy has seen the Premier League as offering a winning formula, leading to some extent to a process of 'Anglicisation'. Others reject the globalised, business oriented model offered by the British company state and see an alternative in the more associative model of Germany. The German model limits foreign or other forms of outside investment and gives fans attractive football at affordable prices. It is also more domestically competitive than the Premier League model, although whether that promotes competitiveness at a Champions League level is a moot point.

UEFA does not like the Premier League model and does not want to see it exported elsewhere. It prefers a model of football that is based on the virtues of 'solidarity' rather than market competition. It sees British clubs gaining an unfair dominance in the Champions League although that was not evident in 2010 when the weakness of sterling and the high tax regime in Britain started to undermine the ability of Premier League clubs to attract overseas talent. Nevertheless, UEFA has sought to reduce the attractiveness of the British model by introducing limits on the amount of debt that clubs can carry. In this case it has been UEFA rather than the EU which has been the predominant actor, reflecting the extent to which football is still a self-regulated activity.

The value of europeanisation

European Integration Studies and especially research on Europeanisation should benefit from an analysis of football in several ways. Most importantly, it highlights the under-researched societal/transnational dimension of Europeanisation as a central theme in EU Studies. Our analysis of football has allowed us to draw attention to societal spheres and transnational agency as important aspects/properties of change in europeanisation processes. This also enabled us to go beyond the conventional top-down (and bottom-up) approaches still dominating this (sub-)field, thus accounting for the complexity of the process (cf. Brand and Niemann 2007). At the same time, our analysis contributed to ascertaining the utility of europeanisation categorisations (e.g. concerning the source of europeanisation, reaction to europeanisation pressures and the degree of change) – mainly derived from the analysis of political contexts – to explain dynamics in societal, i.e. rather non-political, contexts. Football confirms the knowledge about dynamics and mechanisms of Europeanisation that recent studies going beyond the conventional (top-down) perspective have gained. At the same time, two additional categories have been referred to by authors by some authors in terms of reactions to (top-down) europeanisation. For the Austrian case elements of ‘evasion’ of, or ‘escape’ from, the Bosman ruling have been made out. In the Swedish case ‘ignorance/unawareness’, has been chosen to describe aspects of the bottom-up reactions in Sweden.

In this volume it is also especially relevant to consider the contribution of transnational europeanisation to the transformation of European football, again going beyond the most conventional accounts of Europeanisation. Certainly, the contributions to this volume have also pointed to the diversity of factors contributing to European football transformation that are not

directly related to EU decisions. Europeanisation is a process that does not equate only to EU-isation and, moreover, it applies to societal spheres beyond the political realm.

At one time the case of football would not have been seriously considered in europeanisation in EU studies. Recent years have seen substantial progress in the systematic study of support from a variety of disciplinary perspectives at EU and member state level. There has been a realisation that football is big business and in particular has important implications for the way in which the mass media are structured in the EU. It touches on a number of areas of EU concern such as freedom of movement, migration policy and competition policy. It is also an important source of identity for EU citizens and effective interventions by the EU in football could enhance its output legitimacy.

It is, however, a special kind of europeanisation. The 'world of football' is rather an insulated community with its own norms, procedures and regulations. Self-regulation remains important, hence the findings in some studies that UEFA is often as important a source of influence on national regimes as the EU. The EU has been expanding the space in which it operates, both in treaty and other terms, but it is not one in which it is an unchallenged regulatory state. The game's own organisations remain significant actors.

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¹ An example of this could be UEFA's recently introduced regulations on financial fair play, whereby clubs that do not break even in budgetary periods of three years will not be allowed to play European competitions. Similarly, UEFA clubs licensing system is an attempt to create a level playing field.