Football and Politics: Between the Local and the Global

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> It is football […] that inspires you to learn, however poorly or inadequately, if not a new language then a new set of (deeply political) terms in a language not your own, to familiarize yourself with a new history. *Fútbol* is foundational, if not singular, in its ability to move you to take sides in a long-standing political animosity. (Farred 2008, 9)

Grant Farred's (2008) passionate account of his long-distance love for Liverpool Football Club is one of a number of literary works that explore Association

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football (soccer), the world game, as a window onto profound transformations in politics, culture and society. The cultural, social, historical, political, economic and organisational bases and impacts of the sport have received considerable academic scrutiny over the past three decades (Giulianotti 1999; Goldblatt 2007; Hughson et al. 2016; Murray 1994). This body of literature foregrounds the complex interplay between football, politics and society, giving the lie to the cliché that football and politics should not, or do not, mix.

1 Outline of the Handbook

The aim of this handbook is to provide a systematic analysis of the links between football and politics. Though football references are commonplace in the political world, as evidenced by the widespread use of sports metaphors in political speeches, we aim to focus on the ways in and through which football is politicised. This handbook presents a detailed picture of the relations between football and politics in a wide number of European, American, African, and Asian states, as well as a comparative assessment of football and politics in a global perspective. Our ambition is to offer an analysis of the relations between football and politics based on 32 case studies covering five continents. All case study chapters follow the same structure: the political dimensions of the origins and historical development of football; the most relevant historical club rivalries; the political aspects of football as a sports spectacle; and contemporary issues associated with the political use of football. The use of a common framework ensures the comparative nature of the book, therefore enabling the investigation of largely studied cases, along with cases that have seldom been addressed with regard to the examined themes. These cases have been selected based on the premise that football is an important national, economic, political and social issue in the studied country. These countries were also chosen because of the popularity of the game of football among (large segments of) the population.

The first section of each chapter focuses on the **political origins of football**. It addresses how each country introduced a historically English game to the specificities of the local culture. How did the local cultures adapt or resist this global phenomenon? How did the introduction of football affect the construction of a relationship towards England, and more broadly, towards the Western World? These questions are closely linked to the role football played in the construction of the nation (Hobsbawm 2001, 143), and the way local political powers used the rapidly growing popularity of the game of football as a unifying tool. Furthermore, we also pose the question of the dual use of football as a means of both reinforcing political

authorities' international image and reputation and enhancing their internal legitimacy. Finally, football often acts as a catalyst for socio-political tensions and conflicts in society. This effect is linked to the strong symbolic and identity charge bestowed on sports competition, constituting an ideal breeding ground for the construction and reinforcement of national identities, sporting issues being superimposed on ethnic tensions.

The second section of each chapter examines **historical and contemporary club rivalries**. What sets football apart from other forms of popular culture is the centrality of opposition and rivalry, which have a strong symbolic and affective charge (Benkwitz and Molnar 2012). How does the game provide a "ready background for the expression of deeper social and cultural antagonisms" (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001, 1)? Though this particular issue has been addressed rather thoroughly in the literature, the aim of this section is to add to this knowledge base by providing a systematic overview of the various forms and configurations of rivalry.

The third section of each chapter addresses **football as a sports spectacle**. This includes relatively general inquiries such as the perception and significance of football within a given society, but also more specific issues concerning football supporters and their mobilisation inside and outside of the stadium, including violence and (anti-)racism. Most studies essentially focus on the most radicalised and mediatised forms of football fandom in Western Europe. Part of the literature focuses on the way football fandom can stimulate the emergence of radical political tendencies (right or left) (Testa 2009). This is primarily explained by football supporters' attraction to the claims, organisational models or methods of action of certain extremist groups. On the other hand, supporter groups can constitute a major wager for radical currents or political parties that see the stadium as an arena allowing them to acquire the visibility they struggle to achieve in the public debate. They can use and politicise these supporter circles by infiltrating them (Hourcade 2000). However, authors disagree on the issue of the true permeability of supporters in relation to radical political ideas. While some studies conclude that there is a genuine support and engagement among supporters in relation to political ideologies (Balestri et al. 2002), others show that supporters' political expressions aim particularly at provoking, disqualifying the opponent, distinguishing themselves from other groups and constructing identity (Bromberger 2002; Spaaij and Viñas 2005, 2013).

A more recent and promising field of research examines how football fandom can lead to the mobilisation of its members and their participation in large-scale events, hence hinting at the existence of a politicisation process among its members. Here, authors explore the internal resources used by football supporter groups within the scope of their activities, which

can in turn, lead to the development of different forms of collective action (Testa 2009; Lestrelin 2012). This approach is embedded in the broader theory of resource mobilisation that describes supporter groups as sites of political socialisation, consequently enabling them to extend their participation beyond the sporting arena and into society as a whole. Accordingly, authors have shown that football supporters are able to mobilise for general issues linked to the commercialisation of their football clubs, the protection of civil liberties (Lestrelin and Basson 2014) or against police brutality (Beshir 2011).

Finally, we allowed each author space to examine a specific political issue relevant to their case study, providing the basis for a comparison of cases following an inductive approach. This fourth section thus examines **contemporary issues** linked to each case specifically, relating to issues such as religion, gender, corruption, geopolitical interests, social integration or economic dimensions. In the next section, we identify the main cross-cutting themes and patterns from these case studies.

2 Assessing the Politicisation of Football

Research on football and politics consistently shows the dynamic ways in which football is implicated in the production and contestation of collective identities, community and globalisation. In *How Soccer Explains the World*, the American journalist Franklin Foer (2004) argues that we can consider football as a way of thinking about how people identify, organise and express themselves in the global age. The wide-ranging collection of case studies presented in this handbook both illustrates and deepens our understanding of the nexus between football and politics. The handbook sheds light on the complex and dynamic interplay between universalism and particularism in football, politics and society (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999; Giulianotti and Robertson 2009). On the one hand, it highlights the embeddedness of football and politics in global networks, cosmopolitanism, transnational capitalism and global cultural consumption (e.g. Sandvoss 2003; Giulianotti and Robertson 2007). On the other hand, it reveals myriad particularisms of cultural appropriation, adaptation and socio-political contestation in relation to both the sociogenesis and development of football and the contemporary sociocultural, political, economic and ethical issues it experiences in different countries across the globe.

The case studies presented in this handbook foreground the interdependence of local and global processes within football identities and institutions;

that is, the *glocalisation* of the intersections between football and politics (Giulianotti and Robertson 2004). This interplay is evident in, for example, Taylor's chapter on the United Kingdom, which concludes that many English Premier League clubs have become "global brands operating in transnational as well as local and national space." Local forces remain significant, writes Taylor, "but they are closely connected to, and partly shaped by, the global networks through which money, ideas and information flow." The glocal dynamics of football and politics play out differently in each country, but there are also important cross-national homologies.

The contributions to this handbook reveal a number of historical and contemporary patterns, themes and issues. In the remainder of this chapter, we identify several specific, cross-cutting themes that relate to the politicisation process. In order to do so, it is necessary to propose a definition of the concept of politicisation that applies to football.

Jacques Lagroye (2003) defines the politicisation process in terms of both diversion of purpose and surpassing of limits. Diversion of purpose stems from an appropriation by political actors, of a series of issues and activities that are usually situated outside of the institutionalised political sphere (Lagroye 2003). This relates to the issue of the instrumentalisation of sport, and particularly football, by political power(s) at an international, national and local level. The surpassing of limits on the other hand, involves attempts by actors situated outside the specialised political sphere to requalify their action by giving them a political dimension. In other words, it is a way for these actors to surpass the limits imposed by the sectorisation of certain types of activity. It generally derives from a certain "awareness" of the actors evolving outside the ordinary games of political space and its specific issues, regarding what they call the "dimension" or "scope" of their political activities (Lagroye 2003, 365). These include football supporters who use the stadium to express a series of political demands, or football players who engage in political activism or who make political statements.

Throughout this handbook, we examine both levels of politicisation that Lagroye outlines, all the while adding a third dimension. We argue that in order to fully observe and account for the politicisation process as it applies to football, it is essential to integrate a broader definition of the concept of politicisation; one that goes beyond the mere reference to a specialised political knowledge or to factors that influence electoral choice or collective action. This suggests the adoption of an anthropological definition of politicisation, referring to the norms, values and symbols structuring behaviour towards a given political community (Balandier 1985). In this sense, politicisation is based not only on the requalification of activities, but also on the

construction of representations preceding these same activities. Following this definition, football can produce, articulate and communicate feelings, representations and symbols that influence and guide political ideologies and actions.

Diversion of Purpose: Political Origins and Politicisation of Football

Football is a potent source of, and platform for, social and political distinction, regulation and self-expression. The sport has frequently been a political affair involving social groups engaged in status contests. In the modern era, political actors have often used football as a site for political propaganda and mobilisation. Questions of power are Central to grasping the role of sport in global processes and (political) identity formation (Maguire 2005). The case studies reveal the structural relations and "fault lines" (Dunning et al. 2002) that shape and fuel football-centred politics and the dynamics of the relationship between football, politics and society.

Several chapters from the Global South foreground the legacies of *colonisation and imperialism* on trajectories and cultural meanings of football. In a number of countries, football was very much part of colonial or imperial projects. Several chapters describe how the development of football and white settlement/colonisation were intrinsically linked. The game came to these countries via British, French or Spanish colonial or imperial routes, while other groups of European immigrants and local elites played important roles in the consolidation of the sport (see for example Varela's chapter on Mexico). Football in these countries was part of systematic efforts to build colonies, both as a tool of social acculturation, identify formation and social closure among white settlers, and as a form of regulation and social control over colonised populations. For example, in Ivory Coast (Chapter 20 by Künzler), French colonisers sought to promote mass physical education, including football, as an essential part of its civilising mission, while in Egypt the introduction of modern football was part of the British government's political and cultural invasion, coupled with a westernisation movement that sought to imitate the colonists (Chapter 18 by Gibril). In Nigeria, this also included a focus by the colonial regime on recruiting and converting people to Christianity (Chapter 21 by Onwumechili, Totty and Malin).

Similar to other sporting codes such as cricket (James 1963; Guha 2002), the colonial stronghold over football and the symbolic and social boundaries associated with the game were not without its contradictions, conflicts

or contestations. Venter (on South Africa), Chiweshe (on Zimbabwe), Onwumechili et al. (on Nigeria), Bandyopadhyay (on India) and Varela (on Mexico) all discuss the emergence of an indigenous football culture and its growing significance as a tool for self-assertion, self-affirmation and "a cultural weapon to fight the Imperialist" (Bandyopadhyay). For example, Chiweshe discusses in detail how in Zimbabwe, sport, and football in particular, transformed over time from a tool for Rhodesian community and national building to a platform where black people "strove to carve out and control their own space and lives and to blunt and mitigate the impact of colonial policies and practices." In a similar vein, Bandyopadhyay argues that the appropriation of football in colonial India for nationalist purposes "points to football's transformed role as an instrument of reaction, resistance and subversion." In addition, Künzler shows that Ivorians were reluctant to adopt the sporting agenda of the colonisers and instead began to establish their own football clubs; even though, Künzler reminds us, these clubs did not play a considerable role in the struggle for independence in Ivory Coast.

The case studies presented in this handbook reveal various contemporary forms of *instrumentalisation of football by political powers* that align with Lagroye's notion of diversion of purpose. In several countries, football competitions have been potent proxy battles between rival political factions, or served as platforms to advance particular political agendas. In Indonesia, politicians have used football clubs to access a mass audience and to push their nationalist agendas (Chapter 31 by Fuller); in Egypt (Chapter 18 by Gibril) and in Turkey (Chapter 33 by Irak and Polo), football has long been a space that players, administrators, politicians and spectators invest into express political demands, assert political identities, and challenge or support government actions; in Uruguay, it has been common for politicians to hold seats in football clubs or association committees (Bizzozero Revelez and Quirici chapter); and politicians in Spain have long been aligning themselves with particular football clubs in the formation and contestation of Spanish and local nationalisms (especially Catalan and Basque) (Viñas chapter); to name but a few examples.

Japan is a noteworthy exception in this regard. Horne and Manzenreiter conclude that political elites in Japan have rarely used football as a political resource, as the game's historical significance is relatively thin compared to baseball. Yet, in recent years, the Japanese government has used football for diplomatic purposes, in an effort to garner positive foreign policy relationships. Their chapter describes, for instance, how political actors invoked football following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Tohoku as part of the discourse of community development and involvement. Horne and

Manzenreiter also point to *Captain Tsubasa*, a football manga and television cartoon series that portrays a highly idealised image of football and its relationship to societal values of cooperation, collective orientation, determination and persistence.

Surpassing of Limits: More Than a Game

A key dimension of the politicisation of football is the surpassing of limits (Lagroye 2003), which is evident in attempts by actors within the field of football to give political meanings to their agendas and actions. The chapters in this handbook offer countless illustrations of the political awareness, strategies and actions of actors within football. Common examples include: football administrators who pursue political careers; football club or team owners who frame football in terms of its public value and the "public good" in order to attract public funding and political support for their stadiums and operations; and football supporter groups and players who use the stadium and mass media coverage to express political demands and engage in political activism.

The surpassing of limits is demonstrated in the construction and reproduction of football-related oppositions that are an expression of, but also fuel, wider socio-political conflicts and divisions. Football rivalries have long been a prominent area of focus in football studies. Existing research shows that football rivalries are often idiosyncratic, complex and fluid, underpinned by social, historical, cultural, economic, political and geographical factors. Some studies have sought to identify patterns and typologies of football rivalries which highlight the structured relations of power that exist beneath them (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001; Benkwitz and Molnar 2012; Dmowski 2013; Tyler and Cobbs 2017). The case studies presented in this book provide rich illustrations of several of these patterns and types of football rivalry, but they also offer novel insights that complement the existing knowledge base concerning football-related oppositions. The chapters on Australia (by Hay) and Japan (by Horne and Manzenreiter) show that opposition and competition exists not only *within* football but also *between* different sporting codes, in these cases between rival football codes (Australia) and with other sports (baseball in Japan) competing for hegemony in the national imagination and economy. Hay writes that, in the Australian context, the rivalries between the different codes of football (soccer, Australian Rules football, rugby League) "have been equally, if not more, important" than oppositions between different football clubs. However, he also suggests

that this could "change in the future as the demography of the supporters of the codes becomes more alike."

An important conclusion from the case studies is that football rivalries are dynamic and evolve over time according to circumstance and to changes in the wider contexts in which rivalries develop. Similar to political cleavage structures, the fault lines that "fuel and contour" (Dunning et al. 2002) football rivalries are mutable. Changes can occur because of changes in the social divisions that underpin cleavages, because of changes in the collective identity that allows cleavages to be perceived by those involved, or because of changes in the organisational structure (e.g. a football club) that gives expression to cleavages (Gallagher et al. 1995). The chapters on Germany and the United States provide interesting insights into such changes. Sonntag's chapter analyses the emergence of "new fault lines" in German football that resemble wider oppositions between traditional and modernising forces (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001) and, especially, the perceived tension between tradition and commerce in the production and consumption of football (e.g. King 1997; Torchia 2016). Sonntag signals that these new fault lines run between clubs that are perceived to be traditional (mainstay) and relatively new ventures, or "test tube clubs", that are perceived to be created for (money-driven) business purposes only and have no long-established fan base. Moreover, Parrish and Pelcher show how in the United States, the Major League Soccer (MLS) has actively sought to foster rivalries among teams, for example through carefully planning fixtures, and to construct new rivalries based on geography when selecting new markets for its expansion teams. In other words, football rivalries are actively constructed and maintained not only by football supporters, but also in a more top-down way by football governing bodies and commercial actors (e.g. media corporations) with vested economic interests.

The contributions to this handbook show that football rivalries occasionally take on forms that are more sinister; for example, when they spill over into hooliganism or collective racism or when they become a vehicle for violent extremism. The case studies illustrate the glocalisation of football-related violence and hooliganism (Giulianotti et al. 1994; Dunning et al. 2002; Spaaij 2007). Distinctive football supporter identities and practices that have been implicated in the performance of football-related violence exist across the globe, especially through large parts of Europe and South America. These supporter practices are often highly mediated (Krøvel and Roksvold 2012), as for example in Scandinavia where football hooligans actively produce and consume new (social) media to construct their identities and reputations (Chapter 8 by Radmann and Andersson).

Yet, supporters' use of (organised) violence varies greatly, both quantitatively and qualitatively, across different local and national contexts. For example, Gloriozova highlights the emergence of a codification of hooligan violence, resulting in a "sportification" (Elias 1971; Ingham 2004) of the Russian hooligan scene. Indeed, Russian hooliganism today presents all the attributes of a sports competition (rules and rankings). In contrast, Parrish and Pelcher note the lack of organised fan violence as a "conspicuous distinction" between MLS supporter groups and those in other parts of the world. Moreover, some chapters in this handbook draw attention to the potential harmful effects of security measures ostensibly designed to tackle football hooliganism, thereby continuing a strong tradition of critical social science research on security and risk management in football (e.g. Mastrogiannakis and Dorville 2012). In this context, Ranc and Hourcade identify a tension in French football that equally applies to several other countries included in this handbook: the tension between the desire on the part of shareholders, media and fans to have an active and vocal supporter base, and the governmental will to control (especially working-class) audiences and ensure total security.

In certain parts of the world, football-related violence has long had a distinctively political dimension (see e.g. the chapters on Spain, Italy, Russia, Poland, Germany, Croatia, Serbia and Argentina). There appears to be trend toward the (attempted) fusing of far-right political movements and militant football fans in a number of European countries. For example, the English Defence League (EDL) has sought to attract disaffected football fans to its cause. There are links between the EDL and hooligan groups from a range of English football clubs (Garland and Treadwell 2010). These groups share much of the EDL's anti-Islamic thinking and have been mobilised as "street fighters" to EDL demonstrations. According to Garland and Treadwell (2010), this present fusing of football hooligan culture and extremist politics surpasses the limits of football as a social field and poses a threat to community cohesion in Britain's cities more broadly. The chapters on Russia (by Gloriozova), Poland (by Wozniak), Germany (by Sonntag) and, to a lesser extent, Switzerland (by Busset and Koller), similarly illustrate the relationship between football fandom and right-wing politics. Sonntag notes how in Germany "the fight against hooliganism is always at the same time a fight against the influence of neo-Nazi groups in the stadiums." Kassimeris argues that racism is still an issue of concern in football in Greece and Cyprus and, in the case of Cyprus, is institutionalised, as evidenced by the "kind of myopia that characterises football officials" regarding this issue.

The case studies offer various rich descriptions regarding the ways in which football supporters have used the game to make political demands or engage in political activism. First, a number of chapters add to recent studies of football governance and supporter activism (García and Zheng 2017; Kennedy and Kennedy 2014; Millward 2011). Across the globe, football supporters have organised and been involved in political protests, petitions, campaigns, conferences and lobbying. A noteworthy example is the civic initiatives football supporters have launched to campaign for more democratic, accountable and transparent football club governance, and to prevent foreign corporate ownership of football clubs. Tregoures's chapter on Croatia, for instance, analyses a number of these initiatives in different Croatian football clubs. Moreover, football supporters have at times been active participants in campaigns against team relocation or for/against stadium development. Supporters' political activism surrounding stadium development is examined in Parrish and Pelcher's chapter on the United States, which shows the role football supporters can play as actors in, or opponents to, "local growth coalitions" (Delaney and Eckstein 2004).

Supporter activism frequently exceeds the realm of football to address broader issues of social justice and discrimination. A feature of several supporter groups worldwide is their commitment to and involvement in particular forms of community service and social justice. For example, the chapters on Germany and Switzerland discuss local, national and transnational social projects and anti-racism initiatives that football supporters have organised and participated in. Comparable forms of supporter activism exist in various other countries included in this handbook. In some cases, supporters have further been involved and participated in revolutionary events in Egypt (Chapter 18 by Gibril), Ukraine (Chapter 16 by Ruzhelnyk) and Turkey (Chapter 33 by Irak and Polo).

Representations and Symbolic Meanings

As a form of popular culture that reaches massive audiences and permeates the national and global imagination in many parts of the world, football offers a site for the production and articulation of feelings, representations and symbolic meanings that can influence and guide political ideologies and actions. The aforementioned discussion on the political origins and politicisation of football provides tangible examples of this process. As noted, football is a social field in which the complex and dynamic intertwinement of the local and the global plays out in highly visible ways. In a global age

in which the political economy and governance of football are evolving at a rapid pace (Giulianotti and Robertson 2007), it is unsurprising that the cultures of particular Leagues and clubs share many elements. Yet, each football culture also exhibits distinct forms of ritual behaviour and symbolism (Back et al. 2001; Kassimeris 2010). In many (but not all) nation-states examined in this handbook football is a potent site for the construction and transmission of collective memory and a sense of local, national and global (cosmopolitan) community. In Belgium, for example, De Waele and Sterck show that the national team acts as one of the few rallying points for Flemish and Walloons. Other chapters provide rich insight into the symbolic meanings of football and how these meanings connect with political ideologies and action.

The symbolic meanings associated with football, its institutions and its places can be, and indeed have been, directed towards social change. However, the chapters in this handbook also indicate that football can reinforce nationalistic, authoritarian, class-based and gender-specific notions of identity and community. Bar-On (1997) has pointed out that in both Latin America and Europe, professional football clubs, individual players and supporters have failed to tackle wider systemic and structural issues in late capitalist societies. Football, Bar-On (1997) concludes, "unwittingly acts as an agent of mass indoctrination rather than challenging established dogmas, or serving as a vehicle for deeper, systemic social change." The chapters in this handbook offer some evidence for this claim, but overall they provide a more nuanced and at times more optimistic interpretation. Throughout the book, the authors invite us to reflect on the *cultural politics* of football and, in particular, on changes and continuities along the lines of diversity and inequality—a well-established topic in the social sciences of football (e.g. Giulianotti 1999).

The representation of gender in and through football is a recurring theme in a number of case studies included in this handbook. In doing so, the chapters continue the growing scholarly engagement with the perceived "feminisation" of football, which was a sub-project in the *Football Research in an Enlarged Europe* (FREE) study (Mintert 2015). For example, Radmann and Andersson analyse the development of women's football in Sweden and identify its paradoxical history: while always in the shadow of men's football in terms of economy and media attention, compared to international female club football Sweden is world class. They further argue that the highly successful player and coach Pia Sundhage symbolises Sweden as a football nation. Hay's chapter on Australia reveals a similar paradox. He concludes that while women's football in Australia has become increasingly

competitive and reputable, it has not yet achieved the profile its practitioners warrant, and that traces of gender discrimination remain. Other axes of diversity and inequality covered at length in this handbook include class, race, ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, sexuality.

The contributions to the handbook present intricate analyses of both politics in football and the role of football in politics. In conjunction, they enable a more systematic and comparative synthesis of the links between football and politics, one that is sensitive to the evolving interplay between universalism and particularism, and between the global and the local, within the context of ongoing political, social, cultural and economic transformations in and beyond the world game.

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