Call for papers

Beyond the Big Five

Rethinking the Professionalisation of Football in Europe

Football is often presented as a genuine European success, perhaps even the biggest European success, in a time when Brexit and other nationalistic movements in Central Europe are challenging the processes of Europeanisation and also when some new neo-liberal ideologies are inducing an always more concentrated panel of football countries able to compete on the international scene. Thus, those processes of concentration both of money and media coverage around what is called the "Big Five" (England, Germany, Italy, Spain and France) are becoming a challenge for the smaller leagues (which, moreover, do not themselves form a homogeneous block) and the gap between those two worlds seem to be widening every year.

Those processes are a big challenge for the football world, but they are still under-researched also considering that most of the studies done in recent decades have been focused on the players and their specific "professionalisation" as "workers like any other". Of course the Bosman case made clear that footballers have to be considered in this way, but the growing commercialisation of football, the new forms of regulation implemented by both states and football institutions and the proliferation of related political (and even geopolitical) issues since the 1960s raise the question of the multiple potential definitions of "professionalisation".

Such a project should allow us to broaden our comprehension of the rise of professionalism in European football beyond the "Big Five" and from the 1960s onwards.

Framed during an interdisciplinary project built between the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and the Université de Lausanne (UNIL), which focused on professionalisation processes in Belgium and Switzerland,[1] our ambition though this conference is to capture the varieties of football professionalisation across Europe, or rather all the several processes often mixed behind or beyond the word and the multiple definitions of "professionalisation". Following two workshops held in Lausanne (February 2019) and Brussels (September 2019), it quickly became clear that the Belgian and Swiss examples studied during the project deserved to be put into perspective with new cases from other European countries, also focusing on actors such as the national (and international) federations, the national leagues, but also the trainers, the club directors, the players' agents, the referees, the security officers, the clubs themselves, the journalists, the competitions, and all other kinds of actors involved.

We propose to regroup all those questions into three broad topics:

Axis 1 : « Organising ». The aim is to study the background of professionalisation and levels of power with a focus on the clubs; national and supranational federations; professional leagues and the different state bodies involved in the process.

Axis 2 : « Playing ». The aim is to study the "field actors" and to understand in particular the professional trajectories of players, coaches, managers and players' agents.

Axis 3 : « Watching ». The aim is to study the actors "in the stands" and who play a role in security, infrastructure management or media broadcasting.

In order to respond to these shortcomings, we propose to organize an international conference that will be held at **the Université de Lausanne from the 27th to the 29th of May 2020**.

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The event is intended to be an interdisciplinary platform and will focus as much on on both women's and men's football

[1] https://www.unil.ch/international/en/home/menuguid/partenariats-privilegies/universite-libre-de-bruxelles/projets-2018/professionnalisme-dans-le-football.html

Information about the conference

The conference will take place on the campus of the University of Lausanne, from the 27th to the 29th of May 2020.

All interested researchers are invited to **submit a proposal by November 15th 2019**. The papers will focus on one of the three topics of the congress and will cover the period from the 1960s onwards.

Proposals will consist of an abstract written in English (around 200/300 words), containing an indication of the chosen theme and accompanied by a short CV which should include personal information (university, address, contact details).

The proposals should be sent to the following address: Beyond.bigfive.congress@unil.ch

The selected researchers will receive an official answer from the organising committee around **10 December 2019**. Interested researchers should know that a provisional paper (around 5,000 words long) should be sent to the organisers in advance to allow the conference sessions to be based on exchange, discussions and critical debates

A publication of the selected works is planned in the second half of 2020, and a discussion will be held on the third day of the conference on possible future collaborations.

Travel and accommodation will be covered as far as the organisers' financial resources allow them to do so. Researchers with childcare obligations or parental commitments are encouraged to announce this as soon as possible, as the organizers will try to provide some childcare solutions during the three days of the conference.

Scientific & organisational committee (by alphabetical order)

- Sébastien Avanzo, PhD student, sociology (ULB)
- Emmanuel Bayle, associate professor, management (UNIL)
- Jérôme Berthoud, project lead, sociology (UNIL)
- Xavier Bernoud, PhD student, political sciences (ULB)
- Jean-Michel De Waele, ordinary professor, political sciences (ULB)
- Bertrand Fincoeur, project lead, sociology (UNIL)
- Frédéric Louault, associate professor, political sciences (ULB)
- Grégory Quin, senior lecturer, history (UNIL)
- Malory Rennoir, PhD student, economics (ULB)
- Philippe Vonnard, project lead, history (UNIL)
- Zahid Mustafi, PhD student, management (UNIL)

For any additional or complementary information, please contact: Philippe Vonnard at philippe.vonnard@unil.ch

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