

EUROPEAN IDENTITY THROUGH SPORT ?

WORKSHOP *EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN IDENTITI(ES) :*
CRISIS OR CONSTRUCTION ?
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Pr. Dr. William Gasparini

Jean Monnet Chair

E3S (laboratory *Sport and social sciences* - EA 1342),

Faculty of sport sciences, University of Strasbourg

- This conference is part of a research program linked with my Jean Monnet European Chair. My project name is “School of European Sport Studies”
- My aim is to analyse sport and its institutional dynamics as a "European social fact" and a social construct. It is a sociological approach which analyzes the institutions and the actors
- My general hypothesis is that the sport (in Europe) is a laboratory of the social and the analysis of the European sports policies allows to understand better the European construction



Outline

1. European crisis
2. Why does the European Union resort to sport to communicate about its identity?
3. What is the European identity?
4. The identification with Europe through sport : a socio-political construct





Europe is in a crisis : the european construction is being challenged

- The European Union does not find coordinated answer in the face of migrants' influx from Syria, Iraq, Africa
- The Southern Europe (Italy, Greece) is the most affected by the massive arrival of the migrants and do not benefit from support of the other countries of the EU (the Northern Europe and the Eastern Europe)
- Economic crisis since 2010 and the high level of unemployment



Europe is in a crisis

- The Greece crisis : Greece was seriously affected with the financial crash (2008)
- Neolibéralism and dismantling of public services
- The radicalisation of a part of young muslims in the underprivileged suburbs (France, Belgium, UK) and the secular way of life -laïcité – and living together are challenged
- The rise of populism and a right-wing extremist movement : France (FN), Austria (PPO), Hungary, Slovakia, Netherlands, Greece (Aube dorée)...
- Crisis of the membership in Europe (cf opposition to Europe by the eurosceptics and the « Brexit » - British exit) and crisis of the european citizenship

European institutions have presented numerous leads in order to rekindle the European project and foster the European integration of the countries that have recently joined the European Union.

Among these leads is the European citizenship through sport



Because sport:

- is historically one of the most Europeanized activities
- conveys values and ethics matching Europe's: solidarity between peoples, fair play, intercultural dialogue, regulated competition in an area without frontiers



The sociologist Norbert Elias considered modern sport to be a tool of civilisation: competitive sport developed in England during the Industrial Revolution as a means to allow individuals to express and release emotions without violence, within a regulated environment

Elias N., Dunning E., *Quest for Excitement*, 1986.



Sport : an European fact



Why does the European Union resort to sport to communicate about its identity?



Together with North America, Europe is the continent where competitive and leisure sports are the most developed.

Moreover, Europe is the biggest sport area in the world, in terms of the number of sport players, members of sport federations, spectators, equipments and big sport events held in Europe (such as the Olympic Games, football World Cups, great tennis tournaments and cycling competitions)



Modern sport is European by its history

- The word “sport” comes from the **French** word “desport” which means “to be diverted, to have fun”
- Modern sport was born in **England** at the end of the 18th century
- The Olympic Games were renovated by the French Baron Pierre de Coubertin in 1894, and the first Olympic Games were organized in **Greece**.



Sport : a social and an European fact

Today, everyone in Europe speaks about sport

Many Europeans know sport and the sportsmen :

- because they practice sport
- because they watch sports on TV

* 60% of the European citizens in the European Union practise sport

* Europeans are more and more attracted by football games and sporting shows on television



80% of the big sport events are held in Europe
4,400 Stadiums (football stadiums) in Europe
out of 12,000 worldwide

Gathering the biggest European football clubs, the Champions League is one of the annual sport events attracting the greatest number of viewers worldwide. Through these broadcast sport events, Europe is known to many people across the globe.



MANY PEOPLE ON THE WORLD KNOW THE MAP OF THE EUROPEAN FOOTBALL CLUBS



THE BASES OF THE WORLD SPORTING SYSTEM WERE BORN IN EUROPE

- Until 1992, the European cities initially accommodated the Olympic Games
- 80% of the international sporting organizations are established in Europe
- A majority of leaders of the international sporting organizations are Europeans



However, the sports practised in Europe also show excesses and corruption, doping and cheating “cases”, which go against the values promoted by the European institutions.

Michel Platini, figure of European football, charged with corruption



Along with Pelé, Ronaldo, Zidane, Messi... Platini was one of the best football players in the 1980s.

He has been the President of the UEFA since 2007.

In 2015, the Justice of Switzerland reproaches him for accepting money in 2011 (2 million Swiss francs) for a 2002 mission as an advisor for FIFA President Sepp Blatter.

Charged with corruption, Michel Platini refuses to run for the FIFA presidency.

Italian-Swiss Gianni Infantino is appointed new FIFA President



Through its history, heroes and “cases”, sport thus appears as closely related to Europe in the eye of the general public.

Sport and physical activity are also an integral part of the European people’s way of life.

For all that, can one affirm that sport brings the European peoples together?

Is sport capable of re-enchanting the European project and promoting a form of citizenship in Europe that hardly gathers support yet?

Can sport play a role in the construction of a European identity ?

What is the European identity?



- More and more researchers in *european studies* use the notion of European identity to refer to the values and ways of life that are commonly shared in Europe.

Europe is understood as a continent gathering several countries:

28 for the European Union



47 for the Council of Europe



Europe is also understood as a civilization that is distinct from the rest of the world.



- European identity is generally analyzed as a psycho-sociological or socio-political process of attachment of its citizens to the European area or European political community
- The European identity would then consist of shared values conveying a feeling of being French and European being French and European
- However, there is no such thing as a single European identity, only various European identities
- That single identity and feeling of being European, or belonging to Europe, are political constructs.
- The European identity results from the collective construction of a European discourse which is a bearer of identity



The identification with Europe through sport : a socio-political construct



1. The promotion of Europe as a medium of identification has been achieved through the communication efforts of the European institutions and European sport entrepreneurs.
2. The limits of Europe are a convention and a political construction



THE 2 EUROPE
POLITICAL/ECONOMIC EUROPE
AND SPORTING EUROPE

European space is different according to the point of view and the object:

for example, Europe of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA - 54 member countries) corresponds neither to the perimeter of Europe of the EU (28 countries), nor with that of Europe of the Council of Europe (47 countries)





THE EUROPE OF THE EU : 28 MEMBER STATES






THE EUROPE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE : 47 MEMBER STATES

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



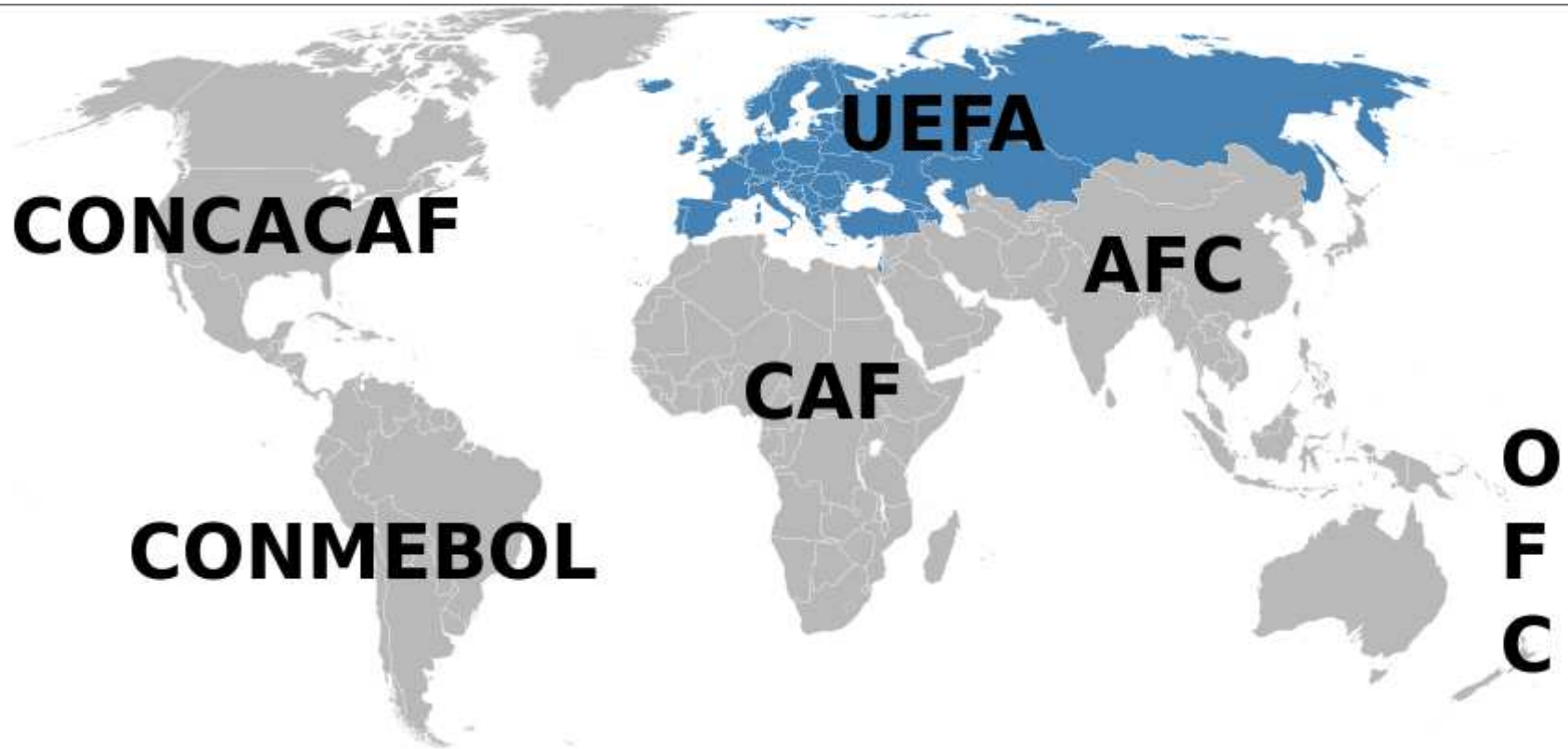
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



 Pays membres du Conseil de l'Europe



**THE EUROPE OF FOOTBALL :
UEFA - 54 MEMBER STATES
THE LARGEST PERIMETER OF EUROPE**



**A EUROPEAN « EFFECT OF REALITY » :
A MENTAL MAP OF EUROPE BY FOOTBALL**

For the Union of European Football Associations :

- Turkey, Israel, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan are European
- Maccabi Tel-Aviv FC, Dynamo Kiev, Galatasaray AS are also European clubs, and give an impression of a extra-large Europe

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A EUROPEAN « EFFECT OF REALITY”

These great football competitions create an “imagined European community” (Benedict Anderson, 1983)

Many young French people know Europe through the Champions League (football) they can watch on television = the Europe of big professional clubs and industrial cities (Milan, Madrid, Barcelone, Turin, Rome, Munich, Bayern, PSG, Lyon, Manchester, Liverpool, Galatasaray...)

UEFA gives an enlarged vision of Europe



All these institutions and geographical configurations are neither natural nor only institutional facts

European sport is:

- -a human production
- -a social, political, economic and a historical construction



But the promotion of Europe as a medium of identification has been achieved through the communication efforts of the European institutions and European sport entrepreneurs.



1. The European institutions' communication:

-**European Union** (28 member-states): European Commission, European Parliament and their communication organisations

- For instance, since the 1980s, the European Commission has been making proposals with a view to promote the identity of the European community. In this perspective, the Adonnino report on “the Europe of citizens” proposes in 1985 that:
 - European sport teams be constituted
 - the European community hold European competitions
 - players bear the emblem of the European community during international competitions
- The Amsterdam Treaty (1999) acknowledges that sport plays a role in shaping the European identity and bringing the peoples together



An other European institutions' communication:

The Council of Europe (47 member-states)

Sport is considered as a field of application of the fundamental values of the Council of Europe since 1976.

The European Sports Charter of the Council of Europe (2001) considers that “sport encourages contacts between European countries and citizens, and plays a fundamental role in the realisation of the aim of the Council of Europe by reinforcing the bonds between peoples and developing awareness of a European cultural identity” (article 6)



An other european strategy is to create a European identity through sport, by means of a communication work carried out by European organizations, think tanks and entrepreneurs, outside of or remote from Brussels:

I call them **“the small entrepreneurs of European integration”** and **“entrepreneurs of the European sport cause”**

They generate formal and informal Europeanization, while developing a European identity and feeling of belonging to Europe: *Sport and Citizenship*, *“les Jeunes européens”*, *“European Citizen Action Service”*, *“European Civic Forum”*...

All these organizations think that the sport is a vector of European identity



Example of small entrepreneurs of European integration” and “entrepreneurs of the European sport cause”

The European think tanks “Sport and Citizenship”



Sport and Citizenship is the first European "think tank" in the field of sport. It offers a forum for new thinking and lobbying which aims at putting forward the core values of sport in society, in the realm of politics, economics and media issues.



TO GO FURTHER IF YOU ARE INTERESTED....

