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Master Thesis

**Football club supporters and the self-determination processes: The
political behavior of supporters of the major football clubs in
Scotland and Catalonia**

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Abstract

The popularity of sport, in particular football has transformed it into a strong means that is widely utilized by politics nowadays. Hence, the influence of football club's identities and values on the political vote of their supporters should never be neglected. The aim of the current paper is to study the influence of four major clubs in self-determination processes in Scotland and Catalonia in the times of the referenda for independence in 2014 and 2017.

The study takes a qualitative approach to the matter and analyzes the way clubs' identities and values affect the political vote of their supporters. The paper takes an unobserved field of research, by merging the factors of football clubs' support and fan culture with its possible significance on the political arena, as well as on the fate of submerged nations' independence movements.

Keywords: sports, football club, political vote, referendum, self-determination, Catalonia, Scotland

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1. Introduction

The raising popularity of football and the speed with which its roles are becoming more diverse are opening new fields of research in social sciences considering the new implications of sports. Academic interest in the long lasting relationship between sports and politics is developing, and the influence that football clubs in particular can have on the current political climate cannot be ignored.

The aim of the current paper is to find out the similarity between a football club's identity and its supporters' political decision to be supportive or against the self-determination processes in the regions of Catalonia and Scotland. The choice of the topic can be justified by two reasons, which correspond to the personal academic interest of the researcher and at the same time take into consideration the overall relevance for the academia. Being Armenian, I have lived my life in the conflict zone between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which makes me familiar with the self-determination processes of ethnic minorities and submerged nations. The choice of sport is also purposeful since I have spent my previous academic years studying sport and its implications for social sciences. The topic is novel for academia as it has not been studied before thoroughly, and the paper represents a new perspective for studying independence movements in Catalonia and Scotland in comparison using the factor of football.

The use of sport in independence campaigns by pro-independence organizations and parties in the pre-referendum atmosphere revealed itself quite differently in Scotland and Catalonia. If in Scotland the main pro-independence locomotive, the SNP party and the "Yes Scotland" campaign group actively engaged sport nationalism into political nationalism, the Catalan reality in this sense was more subtle. In the latter case, the involvement of famous Catalan sportsmen in the pro-independence rhetoric was one of the main channels of sport's use in the pre-referendum campaigns. On the other hand, the Scottish Government's White Paper on Scottish independence, the establishment of the "Working group on Scottish Sport" and the "Sport for Yes" campaign group shows the growing role of sport in the referendum debates.¹ The research is focusing on the two football club rivalries of Catalonia and Scotland: FC Barcelona, and, RCD Espanyol; Glasgow Rangers and FC Celtic. The impact that football historically has

¹ Stuart Whigham and Anthony May, "Sport for Yes"? The role of sporting issues in pro-independence political discourse during the Scottish independence referendum campaign", *International Journal of Sport Policy* 9, No. 3 (2017): 1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2017.1313299>, accessed May 28, 2019.

had into the different spheres of socio-political life of these regions, makes the four clubs relevant factors for investigation of their influence on potential vote of their fans.

The paper has four main blocks that represent the research from theory to empirical evidence. The section *Theoretical framework* is designed for the reader to get to know the theories on sport, leisure studies and fan culture, which helped to form the base of the research. Later, *Literature review* section shows the main directions in the literature were taken into account in the process of the study. *Research design and methodology* section, followed by *Case description* continues the research by adding methods and instruments, as well as presenting the cases of Scotland and Catalonia from historical critical analysis building up to the referenda in 2014 and 2017. At the end, the section *Findings and discussion* presents the questionnaire results and discusses those finding correlations and causes.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Sport as culture: the interpretation of sports role in studying social and cultural phenomena

The global popularity and worldwide spread, that sports gained lately, was due to physical, social, economic and financial recognized benefits that it brought to people all over the world. Most of the sports types neither require much of equipment nor are dependent on cultural or social aspects of life. Yet, the ability to erase barriers between nations, cultural differences and political ideologies, makes sports one of the promising fields of cooperation. It also reflects the division or the unity inside the society being a prism of it.

It is important to understand what we mean by sports as it would also explain some of the reasons why we consider these activities to be vital in studying the relationship between the decision of political voting and supporting a particular football club. Some definitions are focused on the elements that sport is consisting of; the others are more related to the processes that are going on in sport. The principal explanation is probably that sport is an activity.

Sports are often considered as physical activities that are organized for competition, are played to declare a winner, and have fixed rules. The European Sport's Charter (Council of Europe, 1992) defines sport as all forms of physical activity, which through casual or organized participation; aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels. In the current research paper,

the term *sport* is going to be used to describe the entity of different types of sporting activities or sports. The focus as it was mentioned in the introduction will be on football as a type of sport.

As the sport itself, the fan culture of football is highly organized and categorized, which on one hand unites people, but on the other hand, marginalizes the ones, who do not belong to the group. The fan culture represents greatly the *insiders and outsiders* of the society, as the competition on the field transfers into a real life situation as quickly as the ball reaches one or the other gate of the teams.

The importance of the play and physical activity for humanity is shown very detailed in Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A study of the Play Element in Culture*. J. Huizinga studies the element of play in various cultures, comparing its development in different times, countries and environments. He offers a theory, according to which play exists in every civilization and that even it preceded the culture: "In culture we find play as a given magnitude existing before culture itself existed... We find play present everywhere as a well-defined quality of action which is different from "ordinary" life."² From this idea comes the term "homo ludens", or "man the player" that defines such an important function of human being. Unlike culture, which is not inherited biologically, that is to say is human and created in society, play is a function that is not caused nor by biology or logic, neither by ethics. The author writes: "We call *the play* from the point of view of a form of some free activity, which is realized as a fake one, not connected with everyday life and nevertheless is able to completely capture the player; a play which is not conditioned by any immediate material interests or by delivered benefit, which takes place in a specially allocated space and time, in order and in accordance with certain rules."³

J. Huizinga later talks more about anthropological aspects of the play and it has direct connection with the topic of our research paper. He highlights the fact that all explanations existing about the play have one common characteristic that is "play must serve something which is not play".⁴ It is an imitation and symbolizes a release of excess energy; it symbolizes the relations and social interactions that exist in the society. Thereby, play has gradually developed into what we have now as modern sports. In the final chapters of his book J. Huizinga expresses concern about the dissolution of play. He is concerned about the "seriousness" that entered play,

² Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A study of the play-element in culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), 4, http://art.yale.edu/file_columns/0000/1474/homo_ludens_johan_huizinga_routledge_1949_.pdf.

³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

which is visible mostly in sports, where the voluntary act of imitation became a strict form of game. Sports, according to J. Huizinga, cease to be play because of the distinction between professional and amateur, the play spirit of “spontaneity and carelessness” is gone due to creation of a “true” player as opposed to the inferior casual one.⁵ This concern cannot be ignored because nowadays with all the commercialization of the sports, most importantly the politicization of sport and the use of it by sport organizations in politics, underestimates the role of the play and sport in our modern society. Therefore, play and its transformed and more organized version, sport is an imitation of social interactions that can be mediators in the interrelationship between politics and the supporters of a football team.

As an inalienable part of any culture, sport is a unique area to observe how the interpersonal relations develop, and most probably, to track the reasons and motivations for people’s actions outside of the sporting area. The “seriousness” of contemporary football attracts non-political as well as political actors because it is an effective means for transmitting ideas, exchanging opinions, finding like-minded people and forming social circles.

Following the interrelation between the sports as a part of culture, it is important to look at it from the perspective of semiotics, which allows us to interpret sport’s social implications through symbols and symbolic acts of the actors it involves. We shall use the anthropological perspective to define culture presented by Clifford Geertz, the proponent of interpretative anthropology and symbolic anthropology. He agrees with Max Weber that “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun” and considers the culture to be those webs.⁶ The role of a researcher, therefore, is not to search for a strict scientific explanation for that, but to interpret culture searching for its meaning. Culture and its different sectors, such as sports and sporting activities, can offer much more realistic explanations for the development of a society, than any other sector, for example the traditional politics. This approach gives us opportunity to study the interpersonal relations and interactions in this area of culture in a search of a meaning of various changes in the societal dynamics. For this reason it is very interesting to observe the interpretations that Geertz makes through studying the cultural practice of cockfighting in Balinese society, which he explains in “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”. Here he also notes that cockfight “as any other collectively sustained symbolic

⁵L. B. Jeffries, "Johan Huizinga's 'Homo Ludens'", PopMatters. July 6, 2010, <http://www.popmatters.com/post/127853-johan-huizingas-homo-ludens/>.

⁶ Clifford Geertz, *Interpretative culture*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc, 1973), 5.

structure” is “saying something of something”, and the anthropologist can learn from studying culture as “an assemblage of texts.”⁷ In the same way studying sport by referring it as a text helps us to distinguish the symbols and meaningful practices that compose it. By paying attention to mundane practices in the society, in our case interactions, football fans have among each other and with their favorite club, that are kept and reproduced by its people on a daily basis, we discover that the structured acts of the actors reflect dynamics of the society.

French sociologist, philosopher and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu was one of the first to consider sport’s role as crucial in studying social change, and he considered sport to be a major instrument for the latter. He also emphasizes the transformative role sport plays in the formation of individual’s identity being a ready set of rules, as well as values and traditions. Nevertheless, one must note that Bourdieu does not generalize the influence and meaning of sport for everyone, as he takes a more specific approach by pointing out the importance of *habitus*. The social significance of sport depends on the perceptions of the agent, “because agents apprehend objects through the schemes of perception and appreciation of their habitus, it would be naïve to suppose that all practitioners of the same sport...confer the same meaning on their practice or even... they are practicing the same practice”.⁸ He argues about this from the perspective of classes existing in the society and their different expectations from the same practice. In this, he continues to share Weberian conceptualization of social class, which implies that “classes are aggregates of common life chances but not real social groups”.⁹ This is relevant for our case as we see the fan groups of these football clubs as communities that have different expectations from their involvement in sport and that depends on their habitus. Such groups are not as imagined as it might seem from the first sight; they are quite real as we talked about the structured and well-defined normative organization of such social circles.

Using Bourdieu’s language, the participation in the life of a football club brings both cultural and social capital to its participants. Especially, our paper focuses on the social capital as by observing the social interactions and their developments we can see that being a fan entails being a carrier of a certain message. If our hypothesis is confirmed, the social capital gained by being a supporter of a football club transforms into a catalyst for further actions in different

⁷ Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play”, 448.

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 208.

⁹ Suzanne Laberge and Joanne Kay, “Pierre Bourdieu’s Sociocultural Theory and Sport Practice”, in *Theory, Sport and Society*, eds. J. Maguire and K. Young, (June 2002).

spheres, such as in our case, political sphere in showing preference in favor or against the independence.

As the discussion has moved into the realm of social groups and interpersonal communication of supporters of the team, it is important to look at the study of Sydney Verba on primary relationships of small groups in the context of political behavior. He considers that the face-to-face group is where one can find “the locus of decision-making in political systems”.¹⁰ The author considers face-to-face groups to be ranging from the friendly conversations with your peers, neighbors or family members to the communication between high officials that can have the same degree of influence on individual’s decision to vote. For our research, such face-to-face interactions in a social group of football club supporters are crucial. Face-to-face conversations in the scope of a given practice, such as supporting your team at the stadium with your friends or other members of the social group is formally not related to the politics or elections in general. We need to focus on the hidden side of this interaction that is linked informally to other spheres of lives of fans. The way the individual’s political vote is influenced by its social group or the football club she belongs to might differ depending on the circumstances, also on the degree of commitment by the individual.

2.2 Football fan subculture: leisure that shapes lifestyle?

The study would be incomplete without a discussion on football fans subculture and its characteristics as in order to understand the ways in which these people act outside the sporting activity we need to look into the subculture more thoroughly.

Supporters of one or the other football club form a movement, which can be characterized as socialization movement in a social-cultural and normative environment, where the group realizes its activities as supporters. Such socialization can be described as a creation of social identity or *self-images* in the words of sociologist George Herbert Mead. According to Mead, we can talk about two stages of socialization of a person, were the first stage would be the primary socialization. The first stage of socialization takes place within the family or around the close ones, accepting yourself based on the image given by the closed circles. The secondary

¹⁰ Sydney Verba, *Theory of Small Groups and Political Behaviour A Study of Leadership* (Princeton University Press, 1961), 19.

socialization comes later, when a person engages with society other than the circle he is familiar with and by building on the primary experience, he develops new experiences that shape further his social identity. Explaining the development of self-images through interaction with other people, Mead argues that the self is a product of social experience.¹¹

The subculture of being a football fan certainly expects its participants to exchange certain symbols and be aware of the normative and social conventions that exist within it. Mead writes further “the relative values of the “me” and “I” depend very much on the situation”.¹² The way a person is accepted by the society or the community, determines the attitude he has for himself and guarantees his recognition by the community. Here the most important circumstance is being a member of the community that eventually is forming his lifestyle. In classical theories of T. Veblen, M. Weber, G. Simmel and P. Bourdieu, we read the interpretation of a lifestyle “as an element produced by individuals’ social position” that “takes shape explicitly as a visible expression of the endowments and cultural models, which characterize a subject’s standing.”¹³ It should not be taken as a statement though that person’ choices are static and unchangeable. Although, interestingly we should detect a circular mechanism in here, where the lifestyle of an individual affects the choices he makes but on the other hand, the choices and social position are defined by the lifestyle he chose. Does it mean there is a correlation between the political affiliation of a person and the one that has the club he is supporting?

According to Weber, who was the first to use the term “lifestyle” as a means for expressing the prestige of a status group, there is a distinction between a social class and status group.¹⁴ Status group, to which we can surely incorporate the groups of supporters of football clubs, have more cultural attributes and social obligations. In order to be in the group, a fan must bear the responsibilities of sharing the symbolism of the club while attending the game, be aware of the club’s history and achievements, and not restrain herself from confronting the rival club supporters if needed. Lifestyles are created not only based on certain materialistic, but also considering occupational or associational preconditions such as political party or a sports group. Weberian understanding of the distinction between social class and status group is significant for the research taking into account the change of the society that transformed social class based

¹¹ George H. Mead, *Mind, self and society: From a standpoint of a social behaviorist* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), chap. 26, 93.

¹² Mead, *op. cit.*, 92.

¹³ Luigi Berzano and Carlo Genova, *Lifestyles and Subcultures: History and a New Perspective*, (Routledge: 2015), 3.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, 7.

society into a status group based society, which is our contemporary society. Weber's concept of lifestyle is connected to the social groups as it represents the different practices and modes of consumption, and not the "relations to the production and acquisition of goods".¹⁵ Thus, the important factor becomes not the quantity of goods, but the quality, which brings us to the differences between on what was based social identity before and nowadays: wealth and privilege versus access to lifestyle, as mentioned by Berzano and Genova (2015).

The fact of engaging in a certain lifestyle for football fans can be explained by the wish to be part of a familiar community that consists of people sharing the same thoughts and that could exchange ideas not only regarding the object of the support, but more. Sometimes even football is not enough to hold the group together and it is then when links such as political affiliation come into play. As a central part of a football fan subculture, we should mention the realization of a collective action from chanting the traditional song of the club in the stadium to fighting for the honor of the team against the rival's fans. The situations are numerous and different regarding the content and motivation, which constitutes a fact that one of the possible ways to show devotion to the club, might be the action of following its political involvement path.

3. Literature Review

While the uniqueness of the topic gives it a major academic interest and relevance, it also challenges the researcher to do a thorough literature review in order to frame the puzzle adequately and present the question to the reader, who might not be familiar with the issue. The previous experience of the researcher in studying sports implications for social phenomena helped to maintain a balance between new perspectives to study self-determination processes and the immense literature on sports studies, nationalism and political science.

Several important works that helped us to construct the definition of sport, national/regional identity and link them to the self-determination processes in Catalonia and Scotland in the times of the recent referendums compose the theoretical base of the research. Firstly, the groundbreaking work of Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A study of the Play Element in Culture* is a starting point in the search for sports' roles other than a physical activity.

¹⁵ Nicholas Gane, "Max Weber as Social Theorist: Class, Status, Party", *European Journal of Social Theory* 8, No. 2 (May 2005): 219, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431005051764>, accessed May 28, 2019.

Secondly, the literature on sport and nationalism is looked at through the eyes of Alan Bairner in his book *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization: European and North American Perspectives*. The cultural and political perspectives towards the everyday practices, and sports as a great example of it, and leisure studies approach were looked through two essential works: Clifford Geertz' *The Interpretation of Cultures*, and Sidney Verba's *Small Groups and Political Behaviour: A Study of Leadership*.

For the study of the relationship between sport and subcultures, the works of M. Vaczi (2017), L. Berzano and C. Genova (2015), M. Brough and S. Shresthova (2012), A. Brown and A. Walsh (2007) were quite helpful. The role of sport in the formation of Catalan and Scottish identities, as well as in general in the self-determination processes for the regions were looked carefully and in a detailed manner.

The relationship between sport and Scotland were analyzed through the works of S. Whigham (2014, 2017), D. Ranc (2012), A. Bairner (1996), B. Raymond (2017), G. Jarvie and I. Reid (1999), D. McMenemy and A. Poulter (2005) and etcetera. The Catalan identity and sport were observed by looking at the works of R. Llopis-Goig (2017), L. Desfer Edles (2016), J. Hargreaves (2009), J. Tuñón and E. Brey (2016), C. García (2012), H. Shobe (2008) and etcetera.

Although our current research is a comparison of the two cases between Catalonia and Scotland concerning sports, the literature is lacking previous research on the topic including the aspect of football. Nevertheless, a recent article by S. Whigham, H. Lopez-Gonzalez and X. Ramon (2019) sheds a light to the topic and constitutes one of the first attempts to look at political nationalism in Scotland and Catalonia from the perspective of sports. Since the article takes a limited approach to it, observing mainly the influence of famous sportsmen and sports media on the referendum campaigns, our research can be a good contribution.

Other relevant sources that need to be mentioned are two surveys that were used as starting point in making our online questionnaires, those are the Panelbase survey of 2014 on Scottish football fans political orientation¹⁶, and June 2014 Barometer of CIS on Catalan football fans political orientation.¹⁷ The surveys are not directly created for finding out the links between

¹⁶ "An opportunity strike", *Wings Over Scotland: soaring above Scottish politics*, <https://wingsoverscotland.com/an-opportunist-strike/>, accessed May 19, 2019.

¹⁷ Barometer of CIS, June 2014, http://datos.cis.es/pdf/Es3029mar_A.pdf, accessed May 19, 2019.

the political orientation and the football club's support of the fans, which is the task of our paper; nevertheless, as there has not been any significant research on the topic, the information provided is valuable.

4. Research Design and Methodology

The methodology chosen for the current study is qualitative research design, which corresponds to our research by several important points. Firstly, the time limitation of the research would not allow us to realize a purely quantitative research, because it would lack quality and efficiency. Secondly, for the purposes of the research, considering its aim and the components, it was more beneficial to choose qualitative strategy in order to find out and interpret the isomorphism between the support towards a football club and its relationship with later voting of the fans in the referendum.

The case study constitutes a most similar case study design, and the choice of Catalonia and Scotland is justified by the following reasons. Both regions represent submerged nations that recently chose to solve their independence claims in public referenda. The most relevant reason for our study is that the factor of sport has been present throughout the histories of both regions, and even in the times of repressions of regional identities, it took the role of preserving the values and identity features.

Research question is the following:

How does supporting football clubs like FC Barcelona, RCD Espanyol, Celtic FC and Glasgow Rangers affect people's political decision to support or be against self-determination processes in Catalonia and Scotland?

By answering the first research question, the paper will tackle as well the following, more general view to the matter:

To what extent did sport's contribution to self-determination processes in Scotland and Catalonia help mobilize supporters for independence with regard to recent Referendums in 2014 and 2017?

The paper proposes to test two hypotheses that are derived from Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A study of the Play Element in Culture*, where the author implies that "play must serve something that is not play". Thus, we hypothesize that.

H1: The vote of supporters of two major clubs in Catalonia diverged in the self-determination movement in the scope of the recent Referendum because of the influence of the football clubs' identities.

H2: The vote of supporters of the two rival clubs in Scotland was not affected by the clubs' identities and the supporters united for the "Yes" to the independence vote.

In this section, we will discuss the methods chosen in order to explain the relationship between the two variables of the study. For our first and second hypotheses, *the independent variable* is the identity of the football club, and *the dependent variable* for the first hypothesis is the divergence in the vote of clubs' supporters, for the second hypothesis, the decision of the clubs' supporters to unite.

Firstly, in order to observe whether there is indeed a relevant link between being a supporter of a team and later voting in the referendum, we needed to realize interviews to collect supporters' ideas on the matter. Another limitation summed to the time limitation that is the lack of necessary resources, which made impossible to realize in-depth interviews. Nevertheless, four questionnaires have been created including questions specifically designed for each football club; two in Spanish and two in English (see Table 1 and Appendix A). The results in the following and consecutive tables and graphs were derived from the current research, and were calculated using SPSS Statistics. The questions varied from simple closed-ended ones to open-ended questions on the political orientation, the frequency of supporting the team and thoughts on the referendums, as well as the preferred sport newspaper.

Table 1 "Description of questionnaires"

Number of questionnaires	Four
Timeframe of the replies	Two and a half months (April-June)
Number of respondents from Catalonia	200 (100/100)
Number of respondents from Scotland	84 (42/42)
Age of respondents	17 and above
Distribution of questionnaires	Through social media groups (Facebook) and snowball sampling method

Other methods include critical analysis of the existing literature, as the topic was novel and there was a need to choose thoroughly relevant literature. This was one of the limitations as well because before presenting the actual data and information on the research

question, in our case we also had to start from different perspectives of social sciences to frame the research. The different perspectives were sport studies, leisure studies, political science and etcetera, which brought depth to the study.

5. Case Description

The issue of self-determination and independence movements have been studied quite thoroughly from different perspectives, and our research offers a relatively new approach, which is the sport studies perspective. At the beginning of the 21st century, several European nation states confronted with a national identity dilemma that questioned the peace and stability of the state. Coupled with the challenges of globalization processes, the fragmentation of societies, predisposed to segmented way of existence, brought to life new problematic elements. One of them was the renaissance of ethno-territorial identities that constituted a de facto challenge to the centralist model of the unitary state.¹⁸ The research will focus on the illustration of two more prominent cases of demonstration of regional identities in Europe, the Catalan identity and Scottish identity.

The study of regional identity has become one of the most important categories in identity studies as the recent activation of regional self-determination movements makes the academia wonder in the search of reasons for such phenomena. Regional identity, according to Anssi Paasi, is an abstraction that can be used to analyze the existing links between social actors and the institutionalization process. If before the state was automatically understood as the key component for the region to define itself, nowadays with intensive globalization processes, as well as the emergence of single market and European integration have given new importance to regional identities.¹⁹ Our goal in this research is to find out how the social/cultural practices affect the production of people's identities in a way that makes them act in a certain way. Thus, in this we must accept identity as "a social process".²⁰ It is in a constant change and continuous confrontation with other social images of other actors as Della Porta and Diani (1999) note,

¹⁸ Luis Moreno, "Scotland, Catalonia, Europeanization and the "Moreno Question", *Scottish Affairs* 54, (2006): 1, <http://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/1618/1/dt-0502.pdf>, accessed May 5, 2019.

¹⁹ Michael Keating, "Rethinking the Region. Culture, Institutions and Economic Development in Catalonia and Galicia", ECPR Workshop, Regionalism Revised. Territorial Politics in the Age of Globalization, (Mannheim, March 1999): 5, <https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/649823a9-dd20-46db-bbb9-32c6fda79bf4.pdf>, accessed May 6, 2019.

²⁰ Anssi Paasi, "Region and place: regional identity in question", *Progress in Human Geography* 27, No. 4 (2003): 476, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1191/0309132503ph439pr>, accessed May 27, 2019.

which is important feature for the football fan culture. After integration into one or another football fan group, the social image of a person can be modified because either the older image does not correspond or the acceptance of the new image brings significant benefits to the individual. In understanding regional identity it is essential to look not only how the individual and social are integrated spatially, but also how the sociospatial can be understood in the “production” of the individual/collective and vice versa”, according to Michael (1996).²¹ When looking at the interrelation of identity politics of submerged nations, nationalism and sport, one must note that the regional identities may express themselves through sport only. For instance, in Scotland instead of using the official UK anthem “God save the Queen” for football matches, choosing to “The Flower of Scotland”, or using the flag of FC Barcelona in self-determination processes.

5.1 The role of sport in Catalonia’s self-determination processes: a critical overview of the history and current situation

In July 2010, the Spanish Constitutional Court sparked a new wave in the Catalan movement for independence by taking a decision to reinterpret and limit partly the 2006 Autonomy statute of Catalonia. The ruling of the Court declared that there is “no legal basis for recognizing Catalonia as a nation within Spain and that Catalan should not take precedence over Castilian in the region”.²² This action mobilized “unprecedented” number of protesters on the streets of the capital of Catalonia on the day of ruling, July 10, as described by then the mayor of Barcelona, Jordi Hereu.²³ Nevertheless, the unparalleled demonstration was not the only event that occurred during those days in Spain, as the country was participating in the World Cup and had reached the final. On July 11, the Spaniards held the World Cup trophy above their heads spreading the joy of victory to every region in Spain, including to Catalonia, where hundreds of thousands determined protesters turned into celebratory football fans in a day. A day after the march, Plaça de Espanya in Barcelona was filled with Spanish national flags and happy people

²¹ Paasi, “Region and Place”, 476.

²² “Catalonia profile – Timeline”, *BBC News*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20345073>, accessed May 10, 2019.

²³ “Hereu: “No hi ha precedent d’una mobilització així”, *El Periódico de Catalunya (Barcelona)*, July 10, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120304064542/http://www.elperiodico.cat/ca/noticias/politica/20100710/hereu-precedent-duna-mobilitzacio-aixi/379984.shtml>, accessed May 10, 2019.

congratulating each other for the nation's victory. Nine years after the victory we observe a different Catalonia and the numerous demonstrations that followed the events of 2010 showed that the movement was only announcing itself and becoming salient on an international arena. The change in the attitude can be observed in the data obtained through surveys of the Center of Opinion Studies. Unfortunately, the surveys on public's political opinion of earlier years do not include questions regarding sport preferences of respondents; we can look at the later results. For instance, the survey realized in 2017 clearly shows that 55 % of Catalans still would be proud to support the Spanish national team in case of a win, but 67 % mentioned that would be proud in case of Catalan national team's win if such existed.²⁴

The sport component has always been a definitive factor in Catalan identity and its formation processes. Interestingly, numerous parallels can be found in the academia describing the relationship between the football and the society of a given country, and one of them is the following: "Soviet football players (Russian) in the 80s were playing as the Soviet (Russian) army was fighting in Afghanistan, and German, Italian, French football players, as NATO in Persian Gulf and Yugoslavia".²⁵ Not much has changed since those times, moreover, nowadays football matches and football clubs are reflecting the societal reality even more.

By portraying football as an entity of symbols, we can monitor how the Catalan independence movement evolved and at the end recreated an "imagined community" in the words of Benedict Anderson, where people, even not knowing one another personally, became connected spatially. Being a football fan constitutes a major part of one's socio-cultural life, making it irreplaceable very often. The events happening on the field transform into texts that would later be interpreted differently from a perspective of a regular sports fan to a local politician.

On October 1, 2017, after failing to reach an agreement with the central government of Spain, pro-independent political entities of Catalonia hosted a public referendum on independence. Given the fact that in the media were circulating numerous comments on the legitimacy of the referendum, city of Barcelona witnessed clashes between the government and citizens, who came to vote. This was one of the reasons that many famous sportsmen in

²⁴ CEO. Barometre d'Opinio Política 1a onada, 2017, http://upceo.ceo.gencat.cat/wsceop/6168/Taules_estad%C3%ADstiques_-_850.pdf, accessed May 11, 2019.

²⁵ Кирилл Кобрин, "О природе толстокожего бога: Заметки историка", http://www.ruthenia.ru/logos/number/1999_08/1999_8_05.htm, accessed May 11, 2019.

Catalonia expressed opinions on the actions of the government forces, as well as actively opined on the necessity for the citizens to express freely their political will. One of those sportsmen was FC Barcelona's player, Gerard Piqué, who is openly involved in the independence discourse, and being a prominent player in the team can affect people's choices, which is not a new practice in contemporary world of sport.

5.2 FC Barcelona and RCD Espanyol: A rivalry that determines the state of politics?

The socio-political and regional symbolism of football adopted by clubs in Spain represents one of the reasons for the wide spread of this specific type of sport.²⁶ Football clubs with their distinguished symbolism and values they carry, are cultural expressions of Catalan identity, and were and continue to be strongly contested in the self-determination processes across the country. In more than a few cases, the adoption of regional socio-cultural symbolism by a football club have created rivalries in the same cities exacerbating the existing sentiments for identification with the club's symbols. According to Domínguez, writes Llopis-Goig, the rivalries of Spanish clubs that were created in the beginning of the 20th century, "did not arise from social stratification processes; instead they were a reflection of representation and integration mechanisms in the new urban dynamics that were developing in Spanish society at the time".²⁷ Nevertheless, it is obvious that the "seriousness" of the play was present because the symbols that the teams have acquired represented more than banal illustration of being a fan.

In 1899, a group of foreigners, guided by Swiss Hans Max Gamper-Haessing, more known as Joan Gamper in Catalonia, founded the FC Barcelona. Ángel Rodríguez Ruiz, who was a student of engineering at the University of Barcelona, founded Reial Club Deportivo Espanyol de Barcelona, more recognized as Espanyol de Barcelona, in 1900. Interestingly, the club that was created by a foreigner, a non-Catalan, became very significant in defining Catalan identity, Catalanism in general, and took the leading role in the eyes of its supporters in the self-determination processes. Moreover, Espanyol supporters in various debates very frequently

²⁶ Ramón Llopis-Goig, "Football and Politics in Spain: An Empirical Analysis of the Social Base of the Main Football Clubs", in *Sport, Identity, and Nationalism in the Hispanic World*, ed. Mariann Vaczi, *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Literary and Cultural Studies* 4, (December 2017): 80, <https://www.studia-iberica-americana.com/data/100172/assets/Issues/Siba2017@1518966639283.pdf>, accessed May 13, 2019.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

brought up this factor, where they try to express the “authenticity” and uniqueness of their identity as the “real Catalan identity”. FC Barcelona’s team’s motto, “Més que un club” (“More than a club”), repeatedly has been used by their fans, media actors, as well as academics to show the role the team plays outside the sporting sphere.

In regard with politics, FC Barcelona had turbulent times because being a symbol of independence of Catalonia came with certain preconditions, which affected club in various ways. The Civil War, the death of its founder, the establishment of the dictatorship of General Franco and so on had destructive consequences for the team, to some extent slowing down its natural development. As a counterbalance to the centralism “imposed” by Espanyol and its supporters, FC Barcelona was committed to develop the regional singularity of Catalanism and its fans. As Liz Crolley writes, describing the two motivations that the Spanish football is usually directed towards is “to encourage pride in the notion of a single Spanish national identity and as a vehicle for nationalist expression by the nacionalidades històricas”.²⁸ The latter became true for FC Barcelona since 1920s, during the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, when the nationalist protests were accompanied with the blue-and-red flag of the football club instead of *senyera*.²⁹

During the period of the referendum, the role of FC Barcelona was quite strongly emphasized not only by club’s supporters following their motto, but also the international media portrayed the team as a central figure. Especially, after the Spanish football league, La Liga scheduled a match between FC Barcelona and Las Palmas on the day of referendum, an event that became a reason for numerous debates, as it was seen as an act of pressure from Madrid. Eventually, the match was played behind the closed doors, but during the whole game, the screen in the stadium had the word “Democràcia” (democracy) on it. The club has always kept itself neutral, despite the “dramatization” of its role by the media and some of its supporters, an attitude, which suffered some changes when the idea of having a referendum started to materialize. The club released a communication, which was a direct support to the referendum of independence, at least not as subtle as the attempts before. The communication mentions, “FC Barcelona is publically manifesting its support to the persons, entities and institutions who are

²⁸ Jessica Lopez, “Real Madrid and FC Barcelona: A new narrative of football rivalry in 1930s Spain”, (PhD. diss., Wesleyan University, Middletown, 2015), 9, https://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2393&context=etd_hon_theses, accessed May 13, 2019.

²⁹ Simon Kuper, “More than a football club: why Barça is a force in Catalan nationalism”, *Financial Times*, <https://www.ft.com/content/4c58a764-a43f-11e7-9e4f-7f5e6a7c98a2>, accessed May 23, 2019.

working to guarantee these rights” (right to free expression and right to decide).³⁰ Moreover, the communication was also published by the president of the club, Josep Maria Bartomeu, on his personal account in the social media outlet, Twitter. On the other side of the barricades, RCD Espanyol also expressed its position regarding the situation in Catalonia before the referendum, a day after FC Barcelona released its official communication. RCD Espanyol’s message was manifested through three different tweets on Twitter, which makes it less formal. The messages contained the reference that the club “is not less brave” for not expressing its position in favor towards the referendum, unlike FC Barcelona. Moreover, they wrote that the team is preoccupied by the situation of the regions but they “wish to solve it all through dialog and responsibility”.³¹ From the existing discourse, it is obvious that the club that was long associated with the independence movements, even without a direct action is considered to react much more “politically involved” than the club that was portrayed by its followers as apolitical, which also reacts in a more subtle way in the self-determination process of Catalonia.

5.3 The role of sport in Scotland’s self-determination processes: a critical overview of the history and current situation

Sport, and in particular football, is and has been a major field for the expression of practices related to national identity or regional identity. When talking about Scotland this assertion is noteworthy and considering the unrest in the self-determination processes in the region, it needs a more thorough discussion.

Alan Bairner argued that sport has had a major influence in keeping a distinctive feeling of national identity “without which the demand for a devolved government for Scotland would have been voiced only by a handful of eccentrics”.³² Sports also demonstrates the distinctive characteristics and divisiveness of Scottish society. One of the unmistakable examples of the deep divisions that exist inside the Scottish society is the Glaswegian rivalry between two

³⁰ “Comunicado del Barca sobre la situacion politica de Catalunya”, Sport, published September 20, 2017, <https://www.sport.es/es/noticias/barca/comunicado-del-barca-sobre-situacion-politica-catalunya-6298457>, accessed May 27, 2019.

³¹ “La posicion del Espanyol ante la situacion en Catalunya”, Mundo Deportivo, published September 21, 2017, <https://www.mundodeportivo.com/futbol/rcd-espanyol/20170921/431445525682/posicion-rcd-espanyol-referendum-catalunya.html>, accessed May 28, 2019.

³² Alan Bairner, “We are the England Haters!: Sport and National Identity in Scotland”, in Sport, Nationalism and Globalization: European and North American Perspectives, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 45.

football clubs, Celtic and Rangers. Basing the rivalry on the issue of religion, the division later spread into more spheres such as politics. By acknowledging that sport is the prism of divided Scottish society, we should be cautious in taking the role of sport as forming a unified Scottish identity and that this identity in turn functions in politics as a mediator of nationalist interests. Nevertheless, the nature of Scottish sport has been recognized by many sportswriters and academics, such as Roddy Forsyth, who claimed that “Sport have been the most popular manifestation of Scottishness within Scotland...have been its distinct assertion of nationality”.³³

The duality of the Scottishness has intersected in different ways with sport, culture and politics, such as illustrated in the sporting competitions of the Commonwealth Games, where Scotland is represented as a nation, and the Olympic Games, where Scottish compete as a part of the United Kingdom. While it is a key factor to examine sport in Scottish society, the expressions of identity and nationhood through sport should be studied as “selective, time-bound and expressive”, as G. Jarvie and I. A. Reid are advising.³⁴ This consideration is one of the reasons that the timeframe of the study was chosen the before and after the Referendum of Independence in 2014. It will allow us to track the actual link at the moment of the Referendum that exists between Scottish identity and sport, thus eliminating the possibility of asserting the false premise that sport’s influence on the Scottish identity is identical at all times.

While some factors can only be examined depending on a specific time or circumstances, the existence of a constant collective memory in the historical reconstruction of regional identity should not be ignored. In the same article, Jarvie and Reid are referencing Michael Fry, who considered that “the weakness of nationalism in Scotland has been the lack of political history at the right time”.³⁵ The apparent disappearance of “political personality”³⁶, according to Fry, after the First World War symbolized in the downfall of the Liberals was one of the consequences of embracing the Britishness and accepting the fate of a stateless nation. In the sense of proper nationalism to be expressed, Scotland should have had its own state as conceptualized in terms of Gellner and Hobsbawn’s nationalism. Although, Jarvie and Reid find

³³ Bairner, “We are the England haters”, 46.

³⁴ Grant Jarvie and I. A. Reid, “Sport, Nationalism and Culture in Scotland”, *The Sports Historian Journal* 19, No. 1 (1999): 103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460269909445810>, accessed May 14, 2019.

³⁵ Op. cit., 102.

³⁶ Graham Walker, review of *Patronage and Principle: A Political History of Modern Scotland*, by Michael Fry, *Aberdeen University Press*, 1989, <https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/pdfplus/10.3366/sesh.1988.8.8.105>, accessed May 15, 2019.

it problematic in considering the relationship between sport and nationalism, as in Gellner's conceptualization the role of the culture is not recognized. The culture and sport, took the responsibility for preserving nationalist ideas of Scottishness while the stateless nation struggled in defining political nationalism.

Writer Neil Gunn reached the conclusion that "tradition, including sporting traditions, and nationalism were both inextricably linked and that the life and death of one was the life and death of the other".³⁷ The tradition of games and sports that were common among Scots in the 19th century needs to be looked at as a means for gathering cultural, social and, why not, economic capital, hence the time-bound effect of certain sports, such as football, on nationalism building, should not be underestimated. Moreover, William McIlvanney, who was a vocal champion of the sport's role in nationalist causes, opined that the result of the Referendum of 1970 on Scottish Devolution might have been different if Scotland's national team played better in the 1978 World Cup.³⁸ This and other similar considerations were probably served as impetus for granting the Commonwealth Games certain credits in redirecting the Independence *Yes* and *No* campaigns. Interestingly, the year that Scotland held the Independence Referendum in 2014 was also the year that 71 Commonwealth teams came together in Scotland before the referendum, in a commonly recognized event Glasgow 2014. The newspapers and online media reacted to these events immediately, merging the two and making predictions. One of the headlines of *The Guardian* articles reads, "The Commonwealth Games may boost the yes vote for Scottish independence".³⁹

The sport factor in the independence campaigns was still considered marginal in comparison to the "core ideological battlegrounds of the economy and calls for constitutional change".⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the distinct character of Scottish society and the situational role of sport in this case must be taken into account, as sport engaged more people in on-line betting than in

³⁷ Grant Jarvie, "Highland Games, Ancient Sporting Traditions and Social Capital in Modern International Communities", *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism* 10, No. 1 (2003): 8, (27-37)

³⁸ Jarvie and Reid, "Sport, Nationalism and Culture in Scotland", 105.

³⁹ Alan Bisset, "The Commonwealth Games may boost the yes vote for Scottish independence", *The Guardian*, (July 25, 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/25/commonwealth-games-yes-vote-scottish-independence-referendum>, accessed May 16, 2019.

⁴⁰ Grant Jarvie, "Sport, the 2014 Commonwealth Games and the Scottish Referendum", in *Routledge Handbook of Sport and Politics*, eds. A. Bairner, J. Kelly and J. Woo, Chapter 18, *Routledge International Handbooks*, (Routledge, 2016): 3.

opinion polls realized in the scope of the Referendum campaign. For instance, David Bell notices that the bookmakers got the Scotland's decision right and the opinion polls, wrong.⁴¹

One of the reasons of sport's popularity is its potential for bringing the unity of a nation together whether it is on a political level or on a socio-cultural level. For our case, we are going to discuss it critically within a very important aspect of Scottish national identity - the anti-English sentiment in sport. The anti-Englishness, as anti-Spanishness in the Catalan case, is a thought-provoking component of the relationship between sport and identity. In the Scottish case as we have an independent national football team, which officially represents Scotland in international competitions, this sentiment expresses itself more during such events. For instance, during the 2010 World Cup, a company appeared in Scotland that was selling t-shirts with "Anyone but England" expression on it.⁴² Other than such explicit expressions of the anti-Englishness seen on the arena of sporting competitions, the notion of anti-Englishness within Scottish society was considered to be implicit and "overwhelmingly benign".⁴³ As McIntosh et al. mention, anti-English organizations such as "Settler Watch" and "Scottish Watch" failed to organize a "generalized and serious anti-Englishness, being only ultra-extremist groups."⁴⁴ One of the pillars that compose the modern concept of sport is the competitiveness, as we discussed in the earlier chapters, which now is clearly marked in the relationship between Scots and English becoming a very distinctive feature of it. In this competitiveness the anti-English sentiment is a perfectly logical stance if we consider it in the prism of *us versus them* paradigm. Then a valid question arises regarding the extent to which this dislike towards Englishness can be expressed and whether it is expressed solely in the frame of the self-determination movements. It can be only predicted whether after the Scots reached a satisfying results in the independence processes the anti-English sentiment will disappear from the sporting events or not. Giulianotti, who considered that in the case of greater political and economic autonomy, the "cultural dislike" would not be reproduced as routinely as before, expressed such a prediction. He writes: "given

⁴¹ David Bell, "Scotland's Decision: Bookies 1, Opinion Polls 0", *Centre on Constitutional Change*, <https://www.centreonconstitutionalchange.ac.uk/blog/scotlands-decision-bookies-1-opinion-polls-0>, accessed May 16, 2019.

⁴² "Police fears over "Anyone but England" t-shirt", BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/north_east/8533791.stm, accessed May 16, 2019.

⁴³ Ian McIntosh, Duncan Sim and Douglas Robertson, "We Hate the English, Except for you, Cos You're Our Pal": Identification of the "English" in Scotland", *Journal of the British Sociological Association* 38, No. 1 (February 1, 2014): 2, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/10.1177/0038038504039360>, accessed May 16, 2019.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

such a scenario, the net effect would be that the Scottish team (fans) would be required to find a way of positively presenting themselves, rather than simply irradiating an ossified typology of Englishness, and negatively defining themselves against it”.⁴⁵

5.4 Glasgow Rangers and Celtic FC: Has the Old Firm derby become an important factor in the independence movement of Scotland?

Historically, the city of Glasgow has been divided into two frontlines that were represented by the infamous rivalry between the two giants of Scottish contemporary football, the FC Celtic and Glasgow Rangers. The Old Firm derby, which is characterized by a deep religious segregation between the two football clubs, has never been a simple sporting competition and nowadays with the apparent changes in the Scottish society, its role should be re-conceptualized. While the Rangers were Protestantism followers, the Celtics were Catholics, thus the religion was the common denominator in the onset of their rivalry. The origins of the rivalry are “located deep in Scottish history, in the reaction to the Irish immigration of the nineteenth century...”.⁴⁶

A Catholic immigrant from Ireland founded FC Celtic in 1887, and Glasgow Rangers was founded in 1872 by the Scottish Protestant working class.⁴⁷ The Catholics started to support Celtic, which on the other hand provoked a large anti-Catholic response in the face of Rangers supporters that in the end turned into “sign no Catholics” club policy, explains Murray (1984). This policy has been criticized and in the center of controversies regarding its discriminatory nature, until signing their first Roman Catholic player Mo Johnston, in 1989. But such a policy was more than just a part of sporting rivalry, as expressed in the words of Matt Taylor, the Vice Chairman of Rangers in 1960s: “It’s a part of our tradition...we were formed in 1872 as a Protestant boys club. To change now would lose us considerable support”.⁴⁸ Such declarations bring clarity into the discussion because we can see different layers of the rivalry and its effects

⁴⁵ Richard Giulianotti, “Scotland’s tartan army in Italy: the case for the carnivalesque”, *The Sociological Review* 39, No. 3 (1991): 522, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1991.tb00865.x>, accessed May 17, 2019.

⁴⁶ Bill Murray, *The Old Firm: Sectarianism, Sport and Society in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), 2.

⁴⁷ “Explained: The Bitter Religious Divide behind Celtic-Rangers Rivalry”, *Pundit Arena*, <https://punditarena.com/football/the-pateam/explained-the-bitter-religious-divide-behind-celticrangers-rivalry/>, accessed May 17, 2019.

⁴⁸ Paul Larkin, *Albert, Dougie and Wim*, (2012), 80.

on the supporters, and consequently on their actions. The tradition is another inalienable component in the subculture of football fans and in clubs history. It represents one of the principle particles that brings people together in a meaningful “imagined community” that becomes real as the people recognize the boundaries set by the traditions and history.

The Old Firm derby clubs have been most commonly associated with sectarianism discourse present in Scotland, which is a highly controversial and problematic topic. While it is not a necessary factor to be a Catholic and Celtic’s fan, and to be protestant to support Rangers, being a supporter for either of the football clubs becomes a sufficient condition to be labelled as sectarian.⁴⁹ Rangers have been recognized as unionists and supporters of the British monarchy; meanwhile Celtic has legitimate cultural and historical ties with the Irish more than with the British. This inclination towards the British has been also visible in the Rangers supporters’ attitudes in the issues of Scotland’s self-determination processes. The divisiveness of the sectarianism in the city of Glasgow with Rangers areas and Celtic areas found its reflection in the politics as well.

In the recent years, although a significant change has been detected in the relationship between the football clubs and the independence politics of Scotland. The Independence referendum of 2014 revealed 44,70 % for the Yes vote, and 55,30 % for the No vote, and interestingly the Yes vote received 53,49 % support in Glasgow city that holds the Old Firm rivalry.⁵⁰ The surprising results in the surge of Yes vote from the Catholic and Protestant community alike made analysts wonder what caused such changes in the votes. According to the Panelbase survey 48 % of the Celtic supporters were inclined to vote *Yes* for the independence, while 45 % of the Rangers supporters would vote *Yes*, planning to vote *No* accordingly 40 % and 41 %.⁵¹ What accounts for such a rise in the common Yes vote from both Rangers and Celtic fans?

Unlike in the case of the rivalry in the city of Barcelona, the Glaswegian duo’s supporters reacted differently in the times of the Referendum in 2014. As Bairner (1996) argues, football and rugby represent a form of distinct civil society in Scotland, by acting similarly to the

⁴⁹ John Kelly, “Sectarianism” and Scottish football: Critical reflections on dominant discourse and press commentary”, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 46, No. 4 (2010): 419, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690210383787>, accessed May 18, 2019.

⁵⁰ “Scotland Decides: Scotland says No”, *BBC News*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/events/scotland-decides/results>, accessed May 19, 2019.

⁵¹ “An opportunity strike”, *op. cit.*

“holy trinity”, that is the Scottish educational, legal and Church systems.⁵² Forming a new type of civil society, which is created around the idea of football, the fans of Old firm derby showed that the influence of their team’s identities, constructed over the years of rivalry, are not as powerful as before during the referendum. This form of civil society acted mainly in the social media, by creating different platforms for the two sides to gather around a one goal - the independence of Scotland. We looked at Facebook and found alongside with social groups such as *Rangers fans for Independence* and *Celtic Fans for Scottish Independence*, a group named *Old Firm Fans United for Independence*. It becomes obvious that the new developments are changing previously molded rival identities, even if it is a situational change and depending on the referendum atmosphere. The main debates on social media groups, where the fans of both teams support independence revolves around the idea that the independence is not a Celtic or Rangers’ thing, but it is a people’s thing. As many of the fans of the teams called for “freezing the conflict” while fighting for a common cause, we find quite a few headlines in different newspapers mentioning that the teams are uniting for the Scottish independence. The media tries to focus the attention on the fact that “soccer fans supply strong voice in Scottish independence debate”.⁵³

6. Findings and discussion

The current politicization of football is not only a reflection of the changing political realities in Catalonia and Scotland, but also it is the echo of how the projects of national identities evolve nowadays and enter into competition between one another.

When we refer to the political culture typical for Spanish society, three major elements come to mind: national identity (degree to which population feels Spanish or from the region to which they belong), preferred type of state (the territorial decentralization considered appropriate for Spain), and ideological orientation (political preferences on the left-right axis).⁵⁴ The degree of decentralized government in Spain offers a stronger attachment to the regions than to the one united national identity, which makes it an important factor in analyzing

⁵² Whigham and May, “Sport for Yes”?, 5.

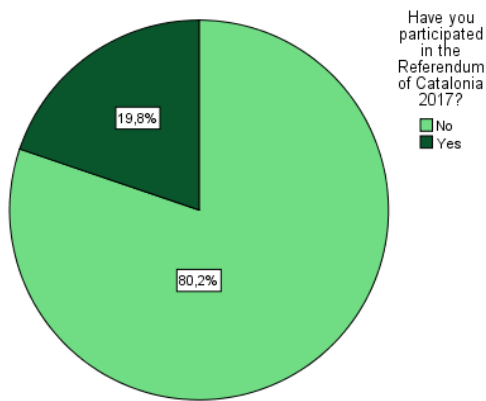
⁵³ “Soccer Fans Supply Strong Voice in Scottish Independence Debate”, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/12/sports/soccer/Celtic-rangers-soccer-fans-supply-strong-voice-in-scottish-independence-debate.html>, accessed May 30, 2019.

⁵⁴ Llopis-Goig, “Football and Politics in Spain”, 82.

citizens/supporters attitudes towards self-determination movements. In the case of Scotland, these factors are also important, but some of them to lesser extent given the fact of the differences between the two cases. Taking into account these reasons, the survey that we designed includes questions covering these three aspects either directly or indirectly.

Traditionally FC Barcelona was considered left wing and against the centralized government's political ideology as we discussed earlier, and RCD Espanyol, was a representative of the "Spanishness" and right wing political orientation. The survey showed that only 19,8 % of the respondents from asked RCD Espanyol fans participated in the referendum (see Graph 1), and from those who participated 50 % are situating themselves on the left position (see Table 2). The ones who did not participate in the case of participation would vote 97,8 % No (see Graph 2), and would situate themselves in the right box, confirming the right orientation of the team (see Table 3). On the other hand, 67,9 % of the asked FC Barcelona fans participated in the referendum (see Graph 3). From the ones who participated and voted Yes, 82,4 % is considering themselves leftists. (see Table 4)

Graph 1 "Espanyol fans participation in the referendum"



Graph 2 "Espanyol fans who did not participate"

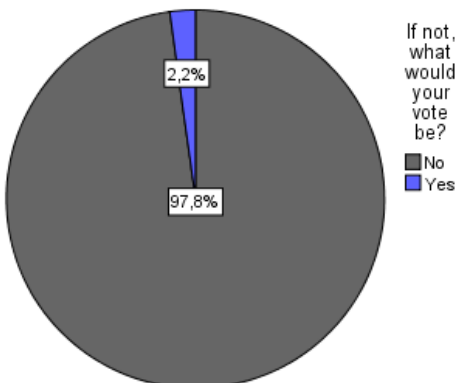


Table 2 “Espanyol fans vote in the referendum and left/right axis”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		When talking about politics it is normal to use the expressions left or right. Where would you situate yourself in the left/right axis?			Total
		Right	I don't know	Left	
If yes, what was your vote?	No	37,5%	12,5%	50,0%	100,0%
	Yes		9,1%	90,9%	100,0%
Total		15,8%	10,5%	73,7%	100,0%

Table 3 “Espanyol fans, who would have voted and left/right axis”.

% within If not, what would your vote be?

		When talking about politics it is normal to use the expressions left or right. Where would you situate yourself in the left/right axis?			Total
		Right	I don't know	Left	
If not, what would your vote be?	No	63,6%	15,9%	20,5%	100,0%
	Yes			100,0%	100,0%
Total		62,2%	15,6%	22,2%	100,0%

Graph 3 “Barcelona fans participation in the referendum”

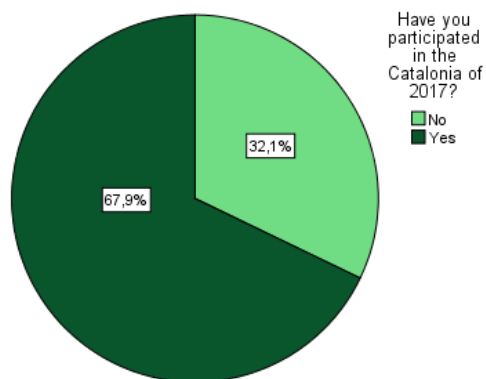


Table 4 “Barcelona fans vote and left/right axis”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		When talking about politics it is normal to use the expressions left or right. Where would you situate yourself in the left/right axis?			Total
		I don't know	Right	Left	
If yes, what was your vote?	No			100,0%	100,0%
	Yes	5,9%	11,8%	82,4%	100,0%
Total		5,3%	10,5%	84,2%	100,0%

Initial expectations were that the supporters of Espanyol would not back up the Yes for the independence vote, taking into consideration the historical links with the Spanish monarchy and as traditionally representatives of Spanish national identity. The opposite expectations were for the FC Barcelona supporters, as hypothesis entails, the club is the generator of ideas for its supporters and being long a symbol of independence, affects the decisions of the voters. The survey answers in this regard confirmed the preliminary expectations.

Interestingly, the two sides were almost equally determined in evaluating the overall political situation in Spain as *bad*. 50 % of Espanyol supporters, who said No to independence, consider the political situation *bad* (see Table 5), meanwhile 76, 5 % of FC Barcelona supporters, who said Yes to independence, chose that answer (see Table 6).

Table 5 “Espanyol fans vote and the political situation”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		How would you characterize the political situation now in the Spain?			Total
		Bad	Satisfactory	Good	
If yes, what was your vote?	No	50,0%	25,0%	25,0%	100,0%
	Yes	36,4%	45,5%	18,2%	100,0%
Total		42,1%	36,8%	21,1%	100,0%

Table 6 “Barcelona fans vote and the political situation”

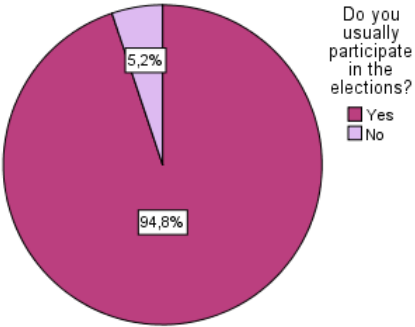
% within If yes, what was your vote?

		How would you characterize the political situation now in Spain?			Total
		Satisfactory	Bad	Good	
If yes, what was your vote?	No		100,0%		100,0%
	Yes	17,6%	76,5%	5,9%	100,0%
Total		15,8%	78,9%	5,3%	100,0%

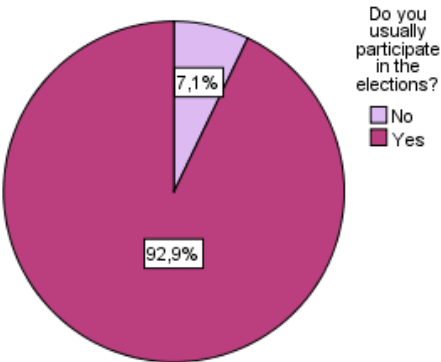
Overall, from possible answers FC Barcelona supporters chose either *bad* or *satisfactory*, meanwhile Espanyol supporters’ answers were more optimistic, and situation was also in a few occasions described either *very good* or *good*. These results indicate that the political instability of the region can be considered as bad situation for the ones, who do not support the independence movement and furthermore are feeling threatened by the ones who continue the self-determination processes in Catalonia. The question that tried to find out

whether the supporters were normally participating in elections without specifically referring to any election, 94, 8 % of Espanyol fans were actively participating, from FC Barcelona only 92, 9 % . (see Graphs 4 and 5).

Graph 4 “Espanyol fans and elections”



Graph 5 “Barcelona fans and elections”

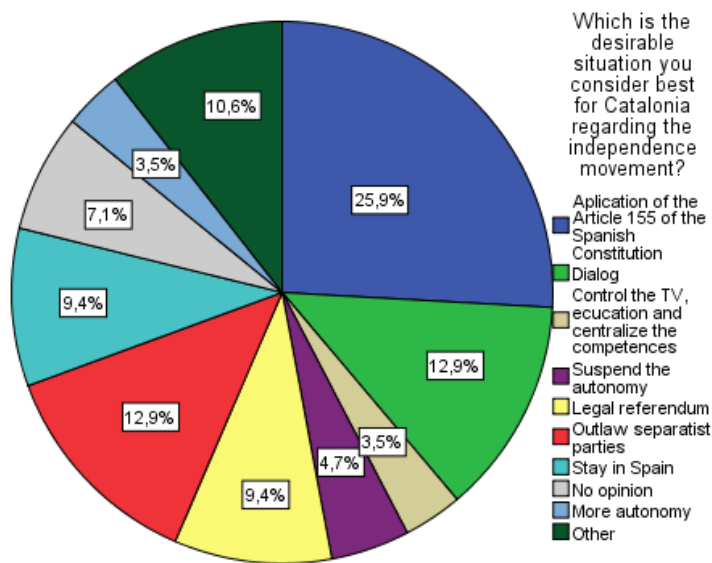


Coming from the distribution of answers regarding the support for or resistance to the independence, we can say that FC Barcelona fans who support independence have high participation in the elections, as it is a means to elect the political power that can make their voice count. On the other hand, Espanyol fans are also quite actively engaged in their citizen duties. While the reasons for not participating in elections or participating actively could vary from person to person, the factor of political trust could be one of the most powerful ones and in particular, in the case of self-determination movements; thus it should be taken into account.

One of the open-ended questions was referring to the possible solutions of the self-determination processes in Catalonia, which could give valuable data on the opinions of supporters. The majority of answers from Espanyol fans were mentioning the need for a dialog

and the application of the Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. Other answers include “stay within Spain” and “organize a legal referendum, where the No wins legally”. Interestingly, some of the answers were mentioning “separatist parties” by calling to “declare them illegal or prohibit their activity”, which can be interpreted as a reference to “illegality” of the self-determination process as Espanyol fans see it. Some respondents mentioned that it is necessary to centralize again the education system in Catalonia, as the schools and universities are being “indoctrinated by nationalist sentiments” (see Graph 6).

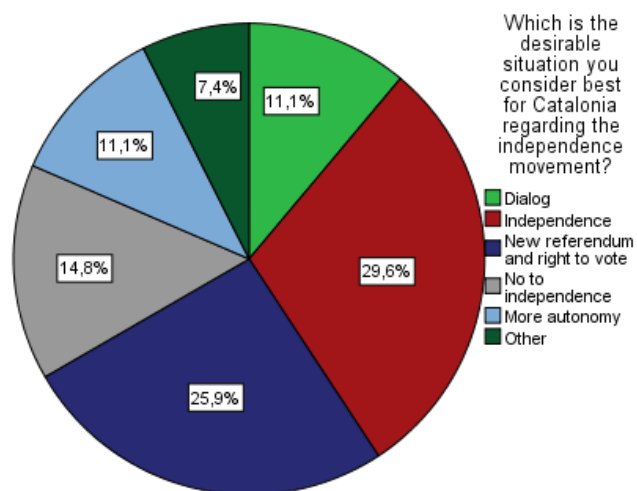
Graph 6 “Espanyol fans on Catalonia’s desirable situation”



While the football club itself might not be doing direct declarations towards support or resistant of independence movement, certain values that run in the history and in the present of the club determines to a certain degree the political orientation of the supporters in Catalonia.

FC Barcelona supporters answered to this question to some degree quite similarly, by mentioning the necessity of having a dialog and another referendum. Other responses had different sentiments, such as “to have patience until the next generation reaches the independence”. The majority of the responses included “to be independence” and “have more autonomy” from Madrid (see Graph 7).

Graph 7 “Barcelona fans on Catalonia’s desirable situation”



The responses mentioning the option of more autonomy often refer to the condition of the Basque country, which is a desirable solution for some fans.

Another valuable factor is what the respondents think of the relationship between their favorite football club and politics. The 50% of the respondents from the blue-and-red army, who voted No, said that their team is actively participating in the politics, whereas the percentage is slightly higher, 52,9% among them, who voted Yes (see Table 7). Some of the fans of FC Barcelona also noted that their team is “discreetly supporting the majority”; another answer was that “the team is actively participating in the politics but in an equidistant way.

Table 7 “Barcelona fans vote and team’s political involvement”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		How would you characterize the relationship between your favorite football club and politics?			Total
		The club is actively involved in politics	The club is not involved in politics	The club supports the independentist movement but discreetly	
If yes, what was your vote?	No	50,0%		50,0%	100,0%
	Yes	52,9%	23,5%	23,5%	100,0%
Total		52,6%	21,1%	26,3%	100,0%

From Espanyol fans who voted No in the referendum 85,7 % considered their team to be apolitical, and only 9, 1 % said the opposite (see Table 8). Analyzing the answers, we can

conclude based on the results that Espanyol fans do not associate their team with politics, because referring to FC Barcelona they mention its politicization, and team’s involvement in politics is considered a negative phenomenon.

Table 8 “Espanyol fans vote and team’s political involvement”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		How would you characterize the relationship between your favorite football club and politics?			Total
		The club is independent from the politics	The club is actively involved in the politics	I don't know	
If yes, what was your vote?	No	85,7%		14,3%	100,0%
	Yes	90,9%	9,1%		100,0%
Total		88,9%	5,6%	5,6%	100,0%

The analysis of the Scottish fans’ answers revealed interesting insights, some of which were predictable, but others were new. Although the majority of the both answers characterized the political situation in the UK as *bad*, the Brexit process support diverged: the majority of Rangers are in favor, whereas it is the opposite in the Celtic case. The correlation between being a Rangers fan and supporting the British state here seems quite reasonable. The Celtic fans, who do not support Brexit process, 82, 4 % consider the situation bad in the UK (see Table 9), this number is 88, 9 % in the case of Rangers (see Table 10).

Table 9 “Celtic fans: support for Brexit and political situation”

% within Do you support the Brexit process?

		How would you characterize the political situation now in the UK?			Total
		Bad	Good	Satisfactory	
Do you support the Brexit process?	No	82,4%	5,9%	11,8%	100,0%
	Yes	50,0%	16,7%	33,3%	100,0%
Total		73,9%	8,7%	17,4%	100,0%

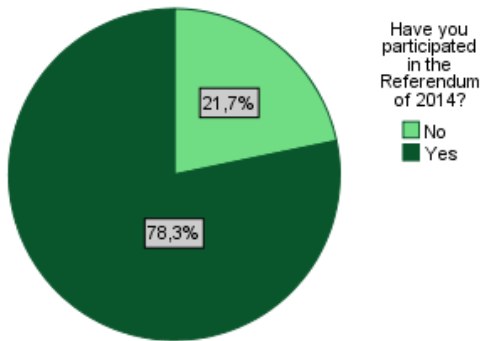
Table 10 “Rangers fans” support for Brexit and political situation”

% within Do you support the Brexit process?

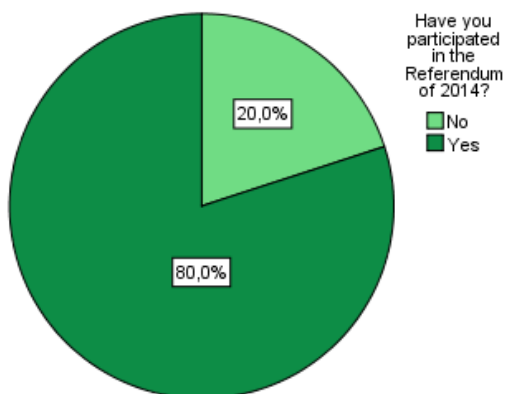
		How would you characterize the political situation now in the UK?			Total
		Bad	Good	Satisfactory	
Do you support the Brexit process?	No	88,9%	11,1%		100,0%
	Yes	72,7%		27,3%	100,0%
Total		80,0%	5,0%	15,0%	100,0%

The participation in the referendum from both team supporters was quite high, based on the answers of the questionnaire: 78, 3 % by Celtic FC, and slightly more 80 % from Glasgow Rangers (see Graph 8 and 9).

Graph 8 “Celtic fans participation in the referendum”

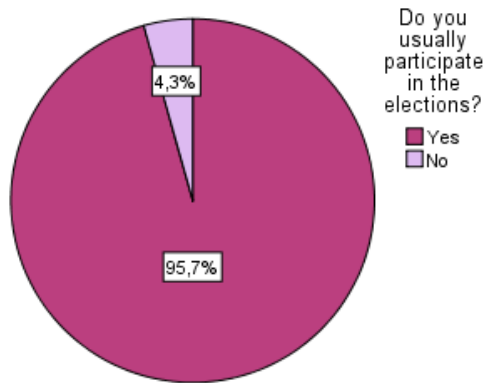


Graph 9 “Rangers fans participation in the referendum”

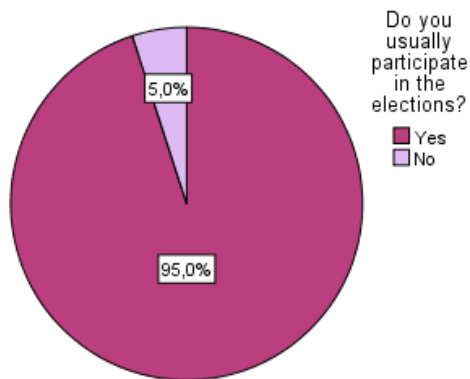


These results are not surprising given the results on the overall participation in elections (Graphs 10 and 11).

Graph 10 “Celtic fans and participation in elections”



Graph 11 “Rangers fans and participation in elections”



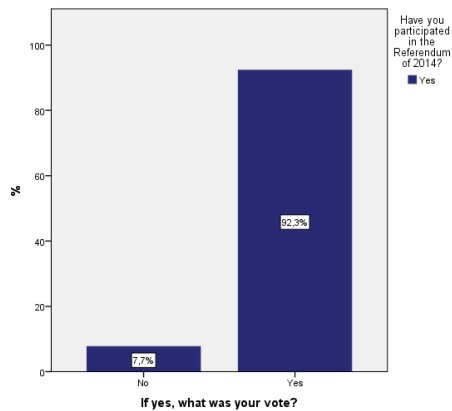
The Celtic FC fans, who participated in the referendum and voted Yes, considered themselves 63, 6 % leftist (see Table 11), and the Yes vote received 92, 3 % in the questionnaire (see Graph 12). They were quite “traditional” in their choices and confirmed team’s long support for independence.

Table 11 “Celtic fans vote and left/right axis”

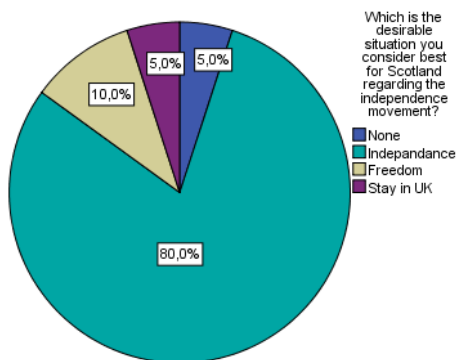
% within If yes, what was your vote?

		When talking about politics it is normal to use the expressions left or right. Where would you situate yourself in the left/right axis?		Total
		I don't know	Left	
If yes, what was your vote?	No		100,0%	100,0%
	Yes	36,4%	63,6%	100,0%
Total		33,3%	66,7%	100,0%

Graph 12 “Celtic fans vote in the referendum and participation”



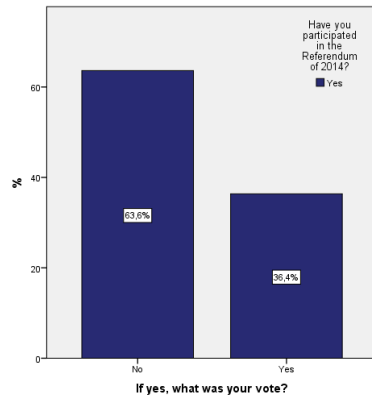
Graph 13 “Celtic fans on Scotland’s desirable situation”



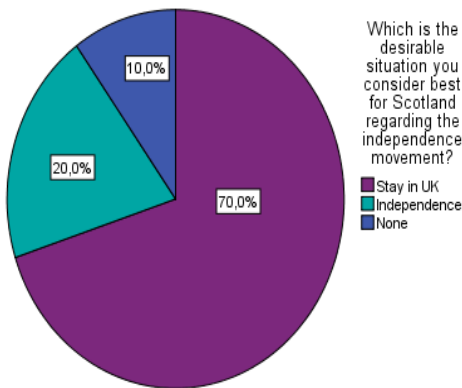
The Celtic fans proposed solutions for the case of Scotland were “to become independent” and “to have a second referendum” (see Graph 13). Emotive responses, such as “freedom” or “power to be closer to the people” were also mentioned, which makes us pay attention to the meanings and the symbolism people prescribe to processes such as independence and self-determination.

From the answers of the Rangers supporters, the *No* vote received 63, 6 % in the questionnaire (see Graph 14). The answers to the question about the desirable solution of the self-determination process in Scotland included “Scotland should remain in the UK” and that “They end their divisive campaign”, a few people mentioned Independence for Scotland, which formed a minority in the answers (see Graph 15).

Graph 14 “Rangers fans participation and vote in the referendum”



Graph 15 “Rangers fans on Scotland’s desirable situation”



Such voting confirms our hypothesis, constituting a continuation of the historical inclination towards the monarchy’s unity. On the other hand, as we did not limit our respondents to only Glasgow, where the Panelbase survey found similar votes from both fans, we have a more diverse picture.

From the Rangers fans, who participated in the referendum and voted No 28,6 % considers as right wing, and the ones who voted Yes, 25 %. Now, interestingly the majority of the answers were towards the choice “I don’t know”, which composed around 71, 4 % (see Table 12).

Table 12 “Rangers fans vote and left/right axis”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		When talking about politics it is normal to use the expressions left or right. Where would you situate yourself in the left/right axis?			Total
		I don't know	Left	Right	
If yes, what was your vote?	No	71,4%		28,6%	100,0%
	Yes	50,0%	25,0%	25,0%	100,0%
Total		63,6%	9,1%	27,3%	100,0%

The majority of both team’s fans were sure that their favorite clubs are not participating in politics, which is different from the Catalan case. The Ranger’s fans who said they voted No in the referendum, 85, 7 % considered the team apolitical (see Table 13). A similar result was recorded from the Celtic FC fans: the ones who voted Yes, 72, 7 % said the team is apolitical and who voted No, 100 % (see Table 14).

Table 13 “Rangers fans vote and team’s political involvement”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		How would you characterize the relationship between your favorite football club and politics?		Total
		The club is independent from the politics	I don't know	
If yes, what was your vote?	No	85,7%	14,3%	100,0%
	Yes	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
Total		72,7%	27,3%	100,0%

Table 14 “Celtic fans vote and team’s political involvement”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		How would you characterize the relationship between your favorite football club and politics?		Total
		The club is independent from the politics	I don't know	
If yes, what was your vote?	No	100,0%		100,0%
	Yes	72,7%	27,3%	100,0%
Total		75,0%	25,0%	100,0%

The questionnaire included also questions regarding the frequency of the attendance to the teams’ matches at the stadium and with whom, which is important in the scope of face-to-face group dynamics. Glasgow Rangers’ supporters, who often attend their team’s matches 50 %

go with their friends and the majority with the same group of people, who goes occasionally, goes 75 % with family (see Table 15). Supporters of Celtic, who said they go often to the games, 66, 7 % goes with their friends (see Table 16).

Table 15 “Rangers fans attendance to the matches”

% within How many times do you attend your team's matches at the stadium ?

		Do you go alone or with your friends?			Total
		Family	Friends	Alone	
How many times do you attend your team's matches at the stadium ?	Often (3-4 games)	16,7%	50,0%	33,3%	100,0%
	Occasionally (1-2 games)	75,0%	25,0%		100,0%
	Always (all home games)	57,1%	28,6%	14,3%	100,0%
Total		47,1%	35,3%	17,6%	100,0%

Table 16 “Celtic fans attendance to the matches”

% within How many times do you attend your team's matches at the stadium?

		Do you go alone or with your friends?			Total
		Family	Friends	Alone	
How many times do you attend your team's matches at the stadium?	Often (3-4 games)	22,2%	66,7%	11,1%	100,0%
	Occasionally (1-2 games)	50,0%	50,0%		100,0%
	Always (all home games)	33,3%	55,6%	11,1%	100,0%
Total		30,0%	60,0%	10,0%	100,0%

About the same question, we received the following answers from Espanyol and FC Barcelona supporters: from red-blue army, who attends matches often, 80 % goes with friends (see Table 17), and from white-blue army, this number is 61, 5 % (see Table 18). These correlations indicate that interacting on a daily or weekly basis with the same group of people can facilitate the transfer of political ideas or values if such exist in the team by discussions, meetings and exchange of opinions.

Table 17 “Barcelona fans attendance to the matches”

% within How many times do you attend your team's matches at the stadium ?

		Do you go alone or with your friends?			Total
		Friends	Family	Alone	
How many times do you attend your team's matches at the stadium ?	Often (3-4 games)	80,0%		20,0%	100,0%
	Occasionally (1-2 games)	54,5%	45,5%		100,0%
	Always (all home games)	66,7%	33,3%		100,0%
Total		63,2%	31,6%	5,3%	100,0%

Table 18 “Espanyol fans attendance to the matches”

% within How many times do you attend your team's matches at the stadium ?

		Do you go alone or with your friends?			Total
		Friends	Family	Alone	
How many times do you attend your team's matches at the stadium ?	Often (3-4 games)	61,5%	15,4%	23,1%	100,0%
	Always (all home games)	56,9%	33,3%	9,8%	100,0%
	Occasionally (1-2 games)	42,9%	14,3%	42,9%	100,0%
Total		57,1%	26,2%	16,7%	100,0%

6.1 A brief analysis of the survey answers about sport journalism

In this section, we will analyze the answers of the respondents to our surveys on their preferences of the newspapers and will try to add these results to our overall discussion of the influence of the football team on the choices of its fans.

The media and the press are of paramount importance for the sport, as we know it in the contemporary world. Their key role in producing, reproducing and amplifying discourses⁵⁵ in relation to sport has changed the perception of sport by its followers and by athletes likewise. The reality shows that the interrelation between sport and media has never been stronger than nowadays, which undoubtedly is an indicator of changes and shifts in the modern societies. Media, alongside with football, is an integral part of popular culture. Garry Whannel writes on the importance of popular culture in the analysis of politics and advises, “We should never regard popular culture as epiphenomenal or marginal – it remains a central element in the political process”.⁵⁶ Media in this sense is an unmistakable variable as in the age of technology and immense information, a football supporter as any other socially engaged person would want to have her hand on the pulse of the world.

The radicalization of the Spanish press in recent years because of the convulsive political climate in the country has situated football at the center of different versions of Spanishness.⁵⁷ It is now describing the unwaveringly nature of the competition between Catalan

⁵⁵ Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes, *Power Play: Sport, the Media and Popular Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, August 2013), 7.

⁵⁶ Garry Whannel, *Culture, Politics and Sport: Blowing the Whistle, Revisited* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis group, 2008), 237.

⁵⁷ Vicente Rodríguez Ortega, “Soccer, nationalism and the media in contemporary Spanish society: La Roja, Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, *Soccer and Society Journal* 17, No. 4 (2016): 633, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2015.1067793>, accessed May 20, 2019.

and Spanish national identities, which is constantly manipulated by the Spanish press with the edge slightly turned to one or another depending on the ideology of the media outlet.

Searching for connections between the independence movements, and the sports news, we have found several important correlations between the newspapers choice of the respondents and their football club belonging. The Catalan reality appeared much more polarized with clearly marked and differentiated pro and against independence choice of the readers of the newspapers. In the context of the Barcelona’s rivalry, the preferences in the choice of the newspaper clearly accentuate the preferences in the team, as well as the attitudes towards the independence and self-determination movements. For instance, a fair number of the Espanyol fans referenced to the rival team, as well as pointed out the biased and subjective nature of Catalan media. One of the respondents said: “I feel bad that being Catalan, I do not read anything from the region, because they speak very little and speak very badly about RCD Espanyol”. Another one pointed out that the Catalan sport newspapers are “the pamphlets of the others”.⁵⁸ Other answers were more explicit in this sense and the choice is inclined towards the ones “that speak well of Espanyol”. Overall, the predominant answers are Madrid-based agencies (see Table 19). We can conclude that the anti-independence sentiment of Espanyol could find its correlation in regard with what type of newspapers to choose which is clearly shown in the survey.

Table 19 “Espanyol fans and sport newspapers”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		What sport newspapers do you prefer to read?					Total
		None	Marca	AS	La Grada	Other	
If yes, what was your vote?	No	16,7%	16,7%	16,7%	33,3%	16,7%	100,0%
	Yes	9,1%	9,1%	18,2%	36,4%	27,3%	100,0%
Total		11,8%	11,8%	17,6%	35,3%	23,5%	100,0%

FC Barcelona supporters mentioned mainly Barcelona-based agencies (see Table 20), and in the Table 19 and 20 we can observe the correlation between a newspaper choice and the vote in the referendum.

⁵⁸ The “others” in this context should be understood as a reference to FC Barcelona.

Table 20 “Barcelona fans and sport newspapers”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		What sport newspapers do you prefer to read?				Total
		Mundo Deportivo	Sport	None	Other	
If yes, what was your vote?	No		100,0%			100,0%
	Yes	36,4%	27,3%	27,3%	9,1%	100,0%
Total		33,3%	33,3%	25,0%	8,3%	100,0%

In the UK, one cannot see with the same clarity the contrasts between London-based media and Scotland-based media, as it is in the case of Catalonia. Talking about the fixation of the British media on referring to the sportsmen as Scottish or British, the commentator Alan Ruddock writes: “It confirms that the British media is... a London media, or at the very least an English media”. It seems that the sport media might not be such a strong actor in the case of Scotland as it is in the case of Catalonia. This idea is confirmed by the survey answers of the Scottish fans, quite interesting in this regard. The answer to the question “Which sport newspaper do you prefer” was predominantly “none” by both Celtic and Ranger’s fans. Very few respondents from Celtic FC fans mentioned *Daily Record*, *The Scottish Sun* and *Guardian*, other answers that accompanied the answer *none* mentioned that “all of them are propaganda” (see Table 21). The minority from Ranger’s fans, whose answer was not negative, mentioned *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* (see Table 22). Although based on the answers, the Scots did not favor any sport newspaper; the contrast in the mentioned choices still can be noticed: Celtic fans prefer Scotland-based media, and the Rangers choose the London-based one.

Table 21 “Celtic fans and sport newspapers”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		What sport newspapers do you prefer to read?			Total
		None	Scottish sun	Daily record	
If yes, what was your vote?	No	100,0%			100,0%
	Yes	81,8%	9,1%	9,1%	100,0%
Total		83,3%	8,3%	8,3%	100,0%

Table 22 “Rangers fans and sport newspapers”

% within If yes, what was your vote?

		What sport newspapers do you prefer to read?				Total
		None	The Sun	Daily Mail	Daily Express	
If yes, what was your vote?	No	85,7%	14,3%			100,0%
	Yes	33,3%		33,3%	33,3%	100,0%
Total		70,0%	10,0%	10,0%	10,0%	100,0%

7. Conclusion

The paper analyzed the relationship between the identity of a football club and its influence on the political vote of its supporters during the referenda. For the purposes of the study, the cases of self-determination processes of Scotland and Catalonia were chosen during the times of referenda in 2014 and 2017 respectively, and four football teams from the region: Glasgow Rangers, Celtic FC, FC Barcelona and RCD Espanyol. A qualitative research methodology was chosen for the case study, which provided us with a comprehensive and thorough approach to the topic, as it is a novel and less studied field in social sciences. The merger of sports, in particular of football with political vote constitutes a new perspective towards the self-determination processes in the regions of Catalonia and Scotland. Except a critical overview of the existing literature and research on the topic, to gain empirically relevant data we realized interviews with the supporters of four clubs through questionnaires. This section will present the conclusions of the findings and results of the research.

The two cases had both similarities and differences regarding the football’s involvement in the politics. An important similarity that was marked throughout whole research is the factor of anti-Englishness and anti-Spanishness in the two self-determination processes. On the other hand we have clearly more homogeneous Catalan society, whereas the divisiveness of Scottish society stands out more (Edinburgher vs Glaswegian), which was also noted by Jarvie and Reid (1999).

The survey results confirm our first hypothesis entirely, as we saw a clearly marked diversion in the votes of the fans from Catalonia, which confirms that the identity of the club has influence on the political orientation of its supporters, besides it becomes an impetus for the vote on Yes or No in the referendum. This statement is true for the Scottish case as well, but to a lesser extent than in Catalonia. About this, interestingly our second hypothesis is confirmed

partially, as the identity of Old Firm's clubs affected the political orientation of their supporters, but they also formed a common ground to support the independence united. The united efforts of Glaswegian derby's participants constitute a situational change in support for Scottish independence, which does not undermine the role of the identities of the clubs but simply talks about a more versatile fan subculture. For the Catalan case, we can say that the ties between the club's identity and its supporters shows to be much stronger and much more solid. One of the possible explanations could be that being a part of Spain yet, the need for more autonomy and the opposition to independence continues to divide the society stronger.

Another interesting observation was made during the analysis of the answers regarding the politicization of the football clubs. In fact, for the Catalan case the fact of the football club to be politically involved was considered predominantly a negative phenomenon. For instance, the ones who were against the referendum and the independence of Catalonia considered their teams apolitical. Especially this statement was true regarding RCD Espanyol, based on the answers of the survey. The Scottish case in this question was more balanced and in fact, both teams appear apolitical in the eyes of their supporters.

The current research appeared to be more descriptive than exploratory, as the task in front of the researcher was also to present the puzzle and then explore it because it is a new topic and less studied. It opens a possibility for a further research to find out more thoroughly why do we have such correlations and how can we further explain the causations.

It can be concluded that overall, the factor of globalization has facilitated the emergence of identity politics of submerged nations, and football, being the most popular sport in the current world is subject to globalization trends as well. Thus, as most of the respondents confirmed as well, sports in these regions of conflict becomes a vehicle for internationalization of the issue through competition, through everyday practices, which most of the time are apolitical but become so when, for instance, the fans discuss politics during the matches. The contemporary politics should take into account the factor of football and the strong influence that the teams have on their supporters, as it can be a means of mobilization in favor or against independence referenda.

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Appendix A
Questionnaire 1

1. ¿Cuál es su edad?
2. ¿Cuál es su género?
3. ¿Cuál es su situación laboral actual?
4. ¿Es usted un seguidor habitual de FC Barcelona/ RCD Espanyol?
5. ¿Cuántas veces usted normalmente asiste a los partidos de su equipo en el campo?
6. ¿Usted va a los partidos solo o con amigos?
7. ¿Usted va a los partidos normalmente con la misma gente?
8. Cuando se habla de política se utilizan normalmente las expresiones izquierda y derecha.
. ¿En qué casilla se colocaría usted?
9. ¿Cómo usted cualificaría la situación política en general en España ?
10. ¿Usted normalmente participa en las elecciones?
11. ¿Cuál es la mejor solución según su opinion para el movimiento independentista de Catalonia?
12. ¿Ha participado usted en el referéndum de independencia de Cataluña de 2017?
13. ¿Cuál fue su voto?
14. ¿Cuál sería su voto si participara en el referéndum?
15. En su opinion, ¿cuál es el rol de deporte en Cataluña?
16. ¿Como usted caracterizaría la relación entre la política y su club de fútbol favorito?
17. ¿Qué periódicos deportivos usted prefiere leer?

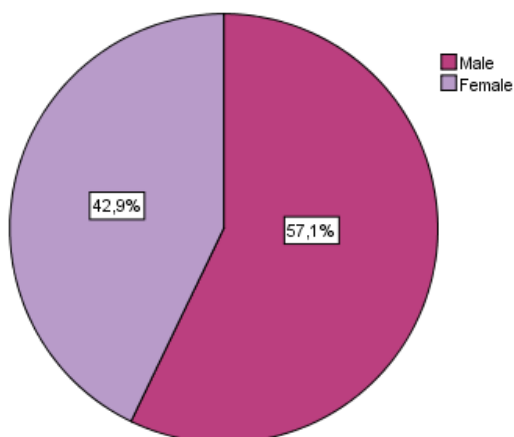
Questionnaire 2

1. Age
2. City
3. Gender
4. Occupation
5. Are you a regular supporter of Celtic F.C/ Glasgow Rangers?
6. How many times do you attend your team's matches at the stadium during?
7. Do you go alone or with your friends?
8. Do you usually go with the same group of people?

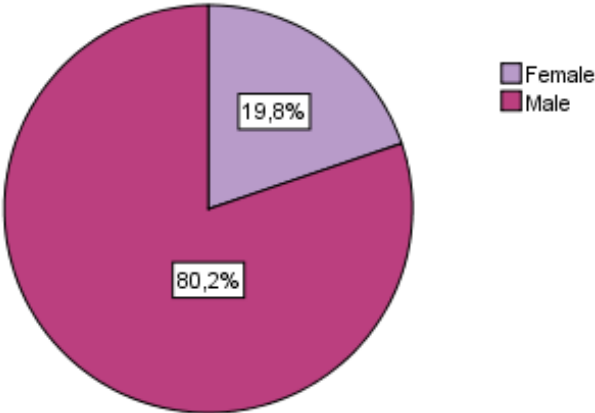
9. When talking about politics it is normal to use the expressions left or right. Where would you situate yourself in the left/right axis?
10. How would you characterize the political situation now in the UK?
11. Do you support the Brexit process?
12. Do you usually participate in the elections?
13. Which is the desirable situation you consider best for Scotland regarding the independence movement?
14. Have you participated in the Referendum of 2014?
15. If yes, what was your vote?
16. If no, what would your vote be?
17. What do you think is the sports role for Scotland?
18. How would you characterize the relationship between your favorite football club and politics?
19. What sport newspapers do you prefer to read?

Appendix B

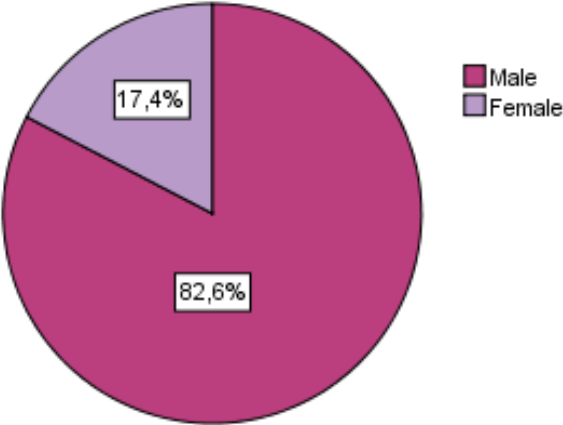
Graph 1 “FC Barcelona fans participation in the questionnaire”



Graph 2 “RCD Espanyol fans participation in the questionnaire”



Graph 3 “FC Celtic fans participation in the questionnaire”



Graph 4 “Glasgow Rangers fans participation in the questionnaire”

