

CELTIC, CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF FOOTBALL: NOTES FROM THE 2003 UEFA CUP FINAL IN SEVILLE

Richard Giulianotti

It was mid-afternoon on the humid, sunny eve of the UEFA Cup final in Seville, and I was walking back along the Avenue de la Constitution in the host city's centre. Awaiting ahead round the corner was Flaherty's Irish bar, across from the city's cathedral, and the main congregation point for hundreds of Celtic fans. From that direction emerged two elegant, East Asian couples, all in late middle age. They stopped and turned their attention to two green-and-white Celtic shirts that the men had just acquired from a street-trader. Upon adorning the shirts, the two men gained joking approval from their spouses; suitably hooped, they continued their stroll through the historic centre of the Andalucian capital.

Football's record books note that Celtic lost the 2003 UEFA Cup final in a dramatic 3-2 extra-time defeat to Porto, the Portuguese champions. But the occasion had wider sociological significance in terms of Celtic supporters' social and cultural identity, and the club's international location. In this discussion, I focus on three dimensions of the Seville excursion. First, it is important to reflect on the club's achievement in reaching the final, and on its capacity to draw an exceptionally large and diverse support to Seville. Second, the final provides for some wider sociological observations regarding

*Richard Giulianotti is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Aberdeen. He is the author of **Football: A Sociology of the Global Game** (Polity Press 1999), and the co-editor of several books, notably **Fear and Loathing in World Football** (Berg 2001), and **Football Culture: local conflicts, global visions** (Frank Cass 1999).*

the internal and external social relations of Celtic fans in Seville. I develop this discussion through the sociological metaphor of religious solidarity (via the ideas of Emile Durkheim), and my prior analyses of football tournaments as social carnivals that are imbued by cultural politics. Third, the Seville final provided the most significant reference point yet for debates regarding the international potential of Celtic, and these may be elucidated further with regard to sociological theories of globalization. The discussion overall is based primarily on fieldwork research, that is, four days spent among different sets of Celtic supporters as they travelled to Spain, took up residence and recreation in Seville, and departed home after the final. I also draw upon interview research undertaken in Scotland with different Celtic supporters both before and after the excursion.

MAKING SEVILLE: HISTORICAL, CONTEXTUAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

Celtic's achievement in reaching the UEFA Cup final broke with recent football history. During Jock Stein's era, Celtic had defeated Inter Milan in Lisbon to win the 1967 European Cup, lost in the 1970 final to Feyenoord of Rotterdam, and reached the 1974 semi-finals before succumbing to the brutal methods of Atlético Madrid. But since 1980 Celtic had never reached the quarterfinals of any European competition. The Seville appearance provided Scottish football with its first European finalists since Dundee United lost in the same competition to Gothenburg in 1987; and potentially its first winners since Aberdeen humbled Real Madrid in the Cup Winners' Cup in 1983 and then defeated European champions Hamburg in the Super Cup.

More notably, the Seville final was the first for any Scottish club following the structural reinvention of European club football over the past fifteen years. That transformation has systematically promoted the competitive interests of the biggest clubs in the largest European nations. At least four key elements may be highlighted. First, the European Court's Bosman ruling in December 1995 abolished European football's restrictions on the fielding of non-national players, and guaranteed freedom of movement for out-of-contract players (Morrow 1996). The ruling increased the entry of 'foreign' players into the UK, and contributed to spiralling wage inflation in the top leagues (Giulianotti 1999, pp.121-2). Second, from the late 1980s, football acquired a more socially respectable and culturally fashionable status in public life, enabling the larger and more glamorous clubs to attract new

Celtic, Cultural Identities and the Globalization of Football

sponsors while charging supporters higher sums for season tickets. Third, the genesis of satellite and digital broadcasting, notably through BSkyB in the UK, enabled the top leagues to multiply their earnings from television contracts. In England, television contracts rose from £9.8 million in 1978 (over four years) to £1.130 billion in 2004 (over three years). Fourth, in 1992, European club football's premier tournament was restructured to suit the interests of clubs in the wealthiest leagues. Previously, the European Cup was open only to the winners of national league tournaments. Its replacement, the Champions League, allows several teams from the most successful (that is, the wealthiest) football nations to compete. Qualification for the Champions League is worth a minimum of £10 million to each club, meaning that over time the tournament has started to produce a self-perpetuating oligarchy of rich clubs. In Scotland, the growing influence of finance and free markets in dictating competitive results has served to puncture the 'uncertainty of outcome' in club fixtures, thereby converting the Old Firm's traditional hegemony into a simple duopoly. The Old Firm account for two-thirds of all turnover in the twelve-team Scottish Premier League (PriceWaterhouse Coopers 2002, p.7). No other club has won the Scottish Premier League since 1985, nor taken second place in the SPL since 1995. Yet at European level, Celtic's UEFA Cup final spot was achieved despite their presence in the restricted markets of Scottish club football. For the 2001-2 season (thus excluding Celtic's UEFA Cup run), the Old Firm squeezed into the top twenty of the world's richest clubs.¹ All of the other clubs play in the world's biggest leagues – Spain, England, Italy and Germany – where television income is far higher. In the 2002-3 season, the Old Firm gained only around £1.5 million apiece in domestic television revenues whereas Liverpool accrued £8 million alone from Premiership television coverage. These structural inequalities rendered Celtic's emergence in Seville all the more unlikely, particularly as Liverpool was one rich-league club, along with Celta Vigo and Stuttgart, that the Glasgow club defeated to make the final.

For Celtic's following, reaching the final symbolized both a magical recovery of the club's internationalist traditions, as originated by the Lisbon Lions, and

¹ *Celtic and Rangers sat at eighteenth and twentieth place respectively, with revenues of £56.9 million and £44.8 million. Celtic had the eighth-highest average home attendance in Europe; Rangers would have made the top-ten too had Ibrox held more than 50,000. However, reflecting their exceptionally restricted off-field earnings, neither club featured in the top twenty for transfer expenditure, nor in the top ten for shirt sponsorship (World Soccer, July 2003).*

Scottish Affairs

an enticing expedition into the higher terrain of European football. Accordingly, the one official record that Celtic broke for certain was in the scale of support that made the passage to Andalucía. It is impossible to proffer more than a tentative estimate of that mobile population, but 80,000 would never be an exaggeration while even 100,000 is not hyperbolic. European club football, and almost certainly the world game at any level, has never witnessed such human migration into a foreign city to watch a single team not 'playing at home'.

Undoubtedly, Seville possessed important pull factors that helped to swell the itinerant following. The city nestles in an ideal regional location for absorbing any sudden influx of northern football fans doubling as off-season holidaymakers. Temperatures of 33-38°C suited visiting holiday-fans, but not Celtic's players in taking on Iberian opponents. Seville's suitability in welcoming Celtic fans carried other historical, social and cultural factors. The autonomous community of Andalucía ('state' flag: green and white) has, as its most popular team, Real Betis, founded in 1909, and who owe their own green-and-white kit to a local man who returned to Seville with Celtic strips that he had found attractive during a Scottish sojourn. In symmetry with the fervour of Celtic's supporters and the traditional enthusiasm of their players, Seville possesses a popular culture that is appreciative of those who personify the key folkloric term of *duende*, that was originally associated with flamenco, and which refers more broadly to the spirit and passion of dancers and other artists who express themselves beyond technical routines. More specifically, Seville's public geography ably staged the transformation of the UEFA Cup final into an elaborated social event for Celtic supporters. The highly intimate, baroque Barrio de Santa Cruz, and its surrounding districts, is filled with tapas bars, hotels and pensions that accommodated some of the supporters. The themed Irish pub, Flaherty's, did a huge trade among the hundreds of Celtic fans that were massed outside, selling a reputed two months' worth of beer in five days.

During the week of the final, far more was going on outside Seville across southern Spain. Thousands of fans were based as far west as Portugal's Atlantic coastline, and as far east as the Costa Dorada; many made day-trips to the game from resorts such as Benidorm, Fuengirola, Malaga and Faro. For the majority, there was little expectation of attending the final. Seville's Stadio Olímpico has a 53,000 capacity and Celtic's official allocation was around 15,700; ultimately as many as 35,000 obtained tickets, mostly through black market sources with prices up to 800 Euros. The majority were left to

Celtic, Cultural Identities and the Globalization of Football

watch the final on a giant screen in a nearby park, or on the television sets of restaurants and tapas bars throughout the city.

Compared to the support generated by club and national teams that I have witnessed at other tournaments,² three aspects of the Celtic supporters' general composition stood out as comparatively unusual. First, there was no numerical or cultural predominance of large groups of young males. The most striking difference was in the age cohort, with male fans in the 40-64 age-ranges particularly well represented, and taking central social positions in those locations where Celtic fans congregated in large numbers. The largest group of senior citizens that I encountered comprised a party of eighteen who settled in at an alfresco bar on the evening after the fixture. The warmth of cross-generational social relations was most visibly demonstrated when a group of older supporters rolled an elderly fan in a wheelchair past a group of fans drinking in the open. The latter raised loud cheers for their more mature fellows, and several approached the seated supporter to welcome him to Seville. The cross-generational social relations, in conversational and symbolic content, served to integrate Seville qua Celtic experience into the supporters' collective memory of Lisbon and other great European nights. Through those social relations, in Flaherty's and tapas bars across Seville, Celtic's European 'tradition' was given fresh hermeneutic substance.

Second, female and family groups were markedly more prominent than one normally finds at major European fixtures. Indeed, several supporters commented on this in interviews afterwards. Adult female supporters, notably those in the 35-64 age-ranges, were particularly prominent, and usually accompanied by male partners. Moreover, and more obviously in the resorts of Costa Del Sol and Costa Blanca, there was a markedly strong presence of families travelling to Spain, which was only partially explained by southern Spain's holiday potential: other Mediterranean football tournaments in the past have not attracted this scale of familial participation.

Third, when strolling amongst the massed congregations of supporters throughout the week, there were constant reminders of Celtic's international support. Coach-loads of fans from Ireland and England have certainly increased in numbers at Celtic Park over the past decade. But in Seville, there

² *Tournaments here include the 1990 and 1994 World Cup finals, and the 1992 and 1996 European Championships; as well as the 1992 European Cup final, and countless Cup finals and key league fixtures in Scottish football.*

Scottish Affairs

were clear signifiers of Celtic's vast support across the frontiers of the Irish and British diasporas. North American fans, notably from in and around New York State, prominently displayed the flags of their supporters' clubs and many of these supporters were adorned in their crested polo shirts. At the Tuesday party inside the Prado de San Sebastian, groups of Australian fans made themselves known, particularly one supporter with an inflatable kangaroo wrapped tightly over his head.

SOCIAL DYNAMICS: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ELEMENTS

Celtic Ceremonies: Durkheimian Thinking

Sociological readings of religion and religiosity provide useful frameworks for interpreting the internal social dynamics of Celtic supporters. In direct terms, the religious aspects of Celtic's Irish-Catholic roots are homologous to Spain's traditional, if markedly declining, Catholic faith. Seville's magnificent city cathedral, situated in agreeable proximity to the largest Irish pub, was visited by small groups of Celtic fans throughout the week. The local **ABC Deportes** publication, in discussing 'Los 'católicos' del Celtic', carried a front-page photograph of supporters kneeling with the headline 'Amén' (21 May 2003).

But it was the more symbolic religiosity of their journey that inspired some deeper comment from supporters. Some talked openly of Seville as a 'Mecca' that exerted an intense centripetal pull on Celtic's global devotees. Others described their travels as a 'pilgrimage' that, for much of the way, traversed the same Iberian route as that covered by the mythical '67 team and its faithful congregation. One fan from Dublin, in recording his experiences of the week, entitled his reflections, 'The Bhoys Go to Communion'.³

These metaphors acquire more substantial elaboration through Emile Durkheim's sociological analysis of religion. Durkheim (1915) argued that religious ceremonies function, as a form of communal self-worship, to bond the collective consciousness of the 'clan' socially and morally. The clan values and protects objects that it defines as 'sacred' rather than 'profane'. 'Rituals' constitute 'rules of conduct' that prescribe how people should act in the presence of these sacred objects (Durkheim 1915, p.56). 'Positive rites'

³ *Joe Barrie, personal communication, 3 June 2003.*

Celtic, Cultural Identities and the Globalization of Football

serve to set out the procedures of religious ceremonies, while 'negative rites' prohibit particular behaviours such as the touching of sacred objects. In 'primitive' religion, the focus of the religious ceremony is the totem that symbolizes the clan; thus, through rituals focused upon totems, the clan members are collectively worshipping themselves.

It is straightforward enough to extend this analytical framework into a modern football context to explain how Seville in particular served to bond the Celtic clan through particular ceremonial rites. The collective consciousness of the supporters was strongly promoted through the wearing of identifying attire. On match day, an overwhelming majority wore the sacred 'hoops' shirt, forging a heightened sense of unity. One fan from north-east Scotland recalled his walk towards the stadium as an entrancing communal experience: 'To look around, and then behind you, and see thousands and thousands in the shirts, the hoops, walking alongside you... I was living the dream, that's what it was, living the dream.' The songs – especially the constant rendition of 'Hail, Hail, The Celts are Here' – constituted positive rites of self-worship. Other songs, notably about Henrik Larsson, highlighted the totemic qualities of the club's representative players.

The most spectacular rites were concentrated on the fixture itself. After attending the game, some supporters described their pride in the bond generated between spectators and players. 'That's the best support I've ever seen Celtic fans produce', 'I've never seen us generate an atmosphere like that before', and 'The supporters' unity was the strongest ever' were three comments from long-term fans. Two key rituals united the support in the customary manner. Before kick-off, the supporters launched unanimously into a vast choral rendition of the anthem 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. That greeting to the players was then eclipsed in audio-visual terms by the familiar Celtic 'huddle'. The totemic team bound itself together on the pitch, as camera flashes sparkled across all stands and an immense anticipatory noise bellowed around the stadium. The sensory tension was relieved only as the players burst out from the huddle to the ecstatic roar of their surrounding followers.

In pre-modern religious ceremonies, we find heightened and often sudden shifts in the emotional states of participants. While pre-match drinking certainly helped to increase the supporters' emotional intoxication, the absorbing drama of the game itself was filled with swings in fortune, as Celtic twice fell behind, twice equalized, and only lost in the final minutes of extra-

Scottish Affairs

time. For Celtic fans, the negative rites of the game (qua ceremony) had been polluted by the gamesmanship of the Porto players, and the ineffectual stewardship of the young Slovak referee. Communal displays of hostility – booing and jeering – were directed at these profane forces during the post-match awards ceremony. Celtic fans observed other post-match negative rites by refusing to decry publicly any of the team's totemic components for their profane, costly actions during play.

Notably, while Celtic's dyadic historical identity, as one half of the Old Firm, is internationally known, fans exercised relatively few negative rites in collective differentiation from Rangers. This stands in some contrast to, for example, the Tartan Army that follows the Scotland national team and which coheres overseas largely through declarations of anti-Englishness (Finn and Giulianotti 1998; Giulianotti 1991). Certainly, in the Scottish build-up to the final, Celtic fans had conjured up several fresh ways to celebrate their Seville trip at the expense of their rivals – such as wearing outsize sunglasses and throwing beach balls around at football matches, or creating numerous rhymes to compare how each side would spend the week of the final ('You'll be watching The Bill, when we're in Seville' became the best-known couplet). However, within Spain itself, the relevance of the negative rites surrounding the Old Firm rivalry dissolved. Instead, the various social relations within Celtic fan gatherings were focused largely upon the positive rites of self-celebration: incessant renditions of 'Hail, Hail, The Celts are Here', with its single abusive reference to Rangers fans, reflected the cultural focus. Where the subject of Rangers did enter social discourse, Celtic fans forwarded what might be termed 'vice-versa negative hypothetical' claims, to suggest that they are more tolerant and orderly than their Glasgow rivals. (Undoubtedly, Rangers fans engage in similar discourses, as do any supporter groups within a strong intra-city rivalry.) For example, Celtic fans argue that while Rangers' manager Alex McLeish and his colleagues have no problems when watching games at Celtic Park, Martin O'Neill would find Ibrox to be far more inhospitable. Additionally, some Celtic fans arriving in Seville on the Tuesday told a story from Torremolinos of how no ill consequences befell a Rangers fan in the resort, despite wearing his team's colours and striding around amongst hundreds of erstwhile rivals. 'Now if that had been a Celtic fan in amongst Rangers fans... .', came the conditional, concluding speculation.

SOCIAL RELATIONS: CONTESTING THE CARNIVAL

In discussing the social relations between football supporters and other social groups, it is useful to examine the cultural politics that imbue patterns of interaction. In prior work, I have explored the cultural politics of sports 'carnivals', noting in particular some of the underlying struggles that arise between supporters, media, football officials and local authorities to control and shape proceedings (Giulianotti 1991, 1995). Supporters favour comparatively unregulated occasions, in which they gather to drink heavily, dress colourfully, express themselves volubly, and socialize and intermingle freely. The various authorities tend to be nervous about the disorderly potential of large crowds, and so favour controlled gatherings that occur within delimited spaces at specified times, perhaps being ceremonially led by appointed 'entertainment' (such as a specific band or an overpowering public address system). The mediation of carnivals is also subject to some struggle in two principle ways: firstly, among the various groups in terms of which dominant images and meanings will emerge from the event; secondly, in the struggle between media institutions, to possess the strongest presence and influence within the occasion itself.

In Seville, the public authorities had taken the customary precautions for a major European fixture. Police reinforcements had been drafted in from as far away as Valencia, and several mobile units were stationed around the centre. On the Monday outside Flaherty's, police kept an eye on Celtic fans, and in the one incident of any note, a supporter who had climbed a small tree to retrieve a trapped beach ball was beaten down by an officer's truncheon blow to the ribs; a teenage boy caught the assault's aftermath across the eye. While dampening the atmosphere temporarily, the supporters did not allow this incident to define their relations with police over the next few days. Throughout the week, only two fans were detained: one for allegedly wrecking a hotel room, the other for a minor assault on a fellow fan that produced a £92 fine (including compensation) and a reported handshake of reconciliation between the two parties (**The Herald**, 23 May 2003). Thus, the dominant discourse, that this mass migration produced only exceptional and isolated incidents, was sustained by other parties. In discussing public order on the day of the match one local reporter professed that 'nothing took place' except a solitary incident whereby a Celtic fan attempted to pilfer a match ticket from a Portuguese tout.

Scottish Affairs

The international participation of their club has allowed thousands of Celtic fans to become football-centred cosmopolitans, generating in part important stocks of knowledge regarding public order issues. The fixture against Celta Vigo of Galicia, earlier in the tournament, had reminded Celtic fans that security forces in Spain are capable of reading exaggerated threats into some fan actions, resulting in the violent imposition of legal 'harmonization'. One veteran supporter from London recalled the experiences:

Celta Vigo was really bad. Not the people but the riot police. On the way back, the supporters were stuck at the airport with only one at passport control. Some guys were getting a bit edgy, the next thing you knew the riot police came wading in, waving the batons, smashing people on the head. I even saw a guy in a wheelchair getting it. There was a reporter there from the **Record** too and he'd to get out of the way. Terrible incident. The police in Seville were OK, but they don't have a sense of humour over here. Earlier on in Vigo there was a big demonstration with the local people about the oil slick, and Celtic supporters got involved as well, joining in big style, so it might have been that that upset the police.

Compared to the Tartan Army's overseas practices, there were relatively few overt, ritualized exchanges of 'friendship' between Celtic supporters and other groups such as police officers, visiting supporters or local people. Very few opposition fans were encountered, due to the overwhelming numerical supremacy of Celtic supporters, and the fact that most Porto followers were day-trippers who spent little time in Seville. Rather exceptionally, on the Tuesday evening, five Porto fans playing traditional instruments wandered circuitously through the old centre of Seville; on each occasion that they turned towards Flaherty's, loud cheers, hand-shaking and other greetings welcomed these 'rivals'. Outside the stadium, there was little post-match interaction between the Celtic and Porto supporters besides the odd formal exchange of congratulations and commiserations. Interaction with local people too was relatively restricted, though there were signs of monetary enterprise in social exchanges as Seville bars inflated the price of post-match drinks, and on the following days some young Real Betis fans sought to exchange their fake replicas shirts for original Celtic tops.

The relations between supporters and rival media institutions carried greater sociological interest. Contemporary technology and institutional arrangements enabled supporters to gain enhanced access to their mediated representation. Immediately after Scottish television stations had filmed

Celtic, Cultural Identities and the Globalization of Football

supporters drinking and singing in central Seville, their subjects were making mobile calls home to confirm their exploits would be recorded when screened in Scotland. Most Seville newsagents carried piles of up-to-date Scottish tabloid newspapers for sale; one redtop had stolen a market lead through having billboards declaring 'Get Your Scottish **Sun** Here' stationed outside many local kiosks. The **Daily Record** had entered into an agreement with the Spanish **ABC** tabloid, enabling the latter to print several stories in English by Scottish reporters on the latest UEFA Cup final news. All of this allowed Celtic fans in Andalucia to gain rapid news on what was happening among their numbers, and with their football team, from the familiar Scottish sources.

The **Sun** and the **Daily Record** became embroiled in a struggle to produce the defining images of the Seville event, and to project themselves as key facilitators of the supporter communion. The **Record**, derided by many Celtic fans as the Daily Ranger, started from a particularly weak market position. All football supporters are wary of systematic bias against their specific club within key institutions, such as the football authorities and the national media. All fans practice what the Italians call *dietrologia*, that is, the science of observing or speculating upon what goes on 'behind the scenes' among powerful groups, and usually to the perceived detriment of the supporters' favoured club. Earlier in the season, the **Record** ran a front-page lead story that, in the eyes of Celtic fans, seemed to provide irrefutable evidence of its suspected systematic bias against their club. Under the headline 'Thugs and Thieves' that was printed adjacent to the club crest, the main article accused Celtic players of criminal misconduct against the newspaper's photographer at a Christmas party in Newcastle. In response, Celtic fans attacked the newspaper for its premature, unjust judging of their players, and initiated a 'Boycott the **Record**' campaign that reportedly seriously damaged the paper's circulation figures (**The Observer**, 3 February 2003). The police investigation concluded that criminal charges against the players were untenable but the boycott remained in place after the **Record** editor had been fired.

Both redtops sent open-top double-decker buses to Seville, equipped with the standard publicity 'girls' and blaring public address systems, to track down stories, snap photographs and generally ingratiate themselves within the supporter carnival. The **Record** bus carried an appropriated image of Henrik Larsson emblazoned across its side, but still met with scepticism from supporters: on one particular occasion, as the bus drove through the centre, a

Scottish Affairs

passing fan shouted 'Naebody reads it' several times to the driver. Meanwhile, to further their marketing opportunities, young local people (primarily female) were recruited by the **Record** to sell copies on Seville's central streets.

Unfortunately for both tabloid buses, heavy traffic was denied access to the real focal points for supporters, such as the areas surrounding Flaherty's, the historic barrio, and the Prado de San Sebastian where, on the eve of the match, a large concert was put on for supporters. Nevertheless, on match-day, the **Record** bus gained a premium spot in the large Plaza Espana, filled by several thousand Celtic supporters. The chief **Record** figure had some success in controlling proceedings by orchestrating the singing and having a (rather poor) piper play through its loudspeakers. The next-day headline story ran 'On Tapas the World: All roads lead to the **Record** bus as fans hold biggest celebration on the planet' (22 May 2003), although others in the vicinity described the newspaper's reporters as 'cheeky bastards' for this purported publicity coup.

Overall, the scale of support and the magnitude of the occasion ensured that greater emphasis was placed by Celtic fans on the internal rather than external aspects of their social relations. Seville provided the supporters with a congregational space for collective celebration, and the practicing of positive rites that involved relatively little recourse to binary opposition in regard to Rangers. In terms of relations with other social groups, the supporters succeeded in distinguishing themselves from other kinds of 'British' fan in the eyes of local police. The supporters' numerical size, geographical spread, and the constraints of the local environment helped to ensure that the various informal carnivals that they generated were neither restricted nor dominated by external institutions such as the local police forces or media agencies. Indeed, reflecting both the pleasures of the occasion and varying levels of unease towards certain sources of journalism, the supporters adopted a reflexive and critical approach in dealing with their mediation by Scottish television stations and the press.

CELTIC, GLOBALIZATION AND 'GLOCAL' CLUB IDENTITY

Substantial research and analysis by social scientists has focused upon the relations of Celtic and their supporters to matters of Irish and Scottish identity (Boyle 1994; Bradley 1995; Finn 1991a, 1991b, 1994a, 1994b, 1999; Murray 1984, 1998). The club certainly began as an 'unambiguously Irish-Catholic'

Celtic, Cultural Identities and the Globalization of Football

institution dedicated to assisting the dispossessed with several noteworthy Irish nationalists among its early officials (Devine 1999, p.495). Finn (1991a, pp.90-95; 1999) has indicated that much of Celtic's history can be read in terms of attempts by Irish-Scots to celebrate their dual national identity. Social identities themselves are viewed as complex, heterogeneous and open to change. Celtic's support obviously connects to this Irish heritage symbolically, through the club crest and colours, the waving of Irish tricolours, and the singing of songs relating to Ireland, Irish nationalism, and Catholicism, to show allegiance to the team. Yet for some supporters, the fact that the connection could be stronger is demonstrated by the restricted personal experience of Ireland among many Celtic supporters, and by the relatively limited repertoire of Irish songs heard at fixtures. In Seville, signifiers of Scottish identity were also present, most obviously in terms of tartan attire, while other forms of football-focused national allegiance were also regularly encountered, particularly through Swedish signifiers (such as Sweden's national football strip or Viking helmets) in celebration of Celtic's Henrik Larsson and Johan Mjallby.

There are aspects in Celtic's historical, institutional and social habitus that draw in other kinds of supporter. Undoubtedly, the club's historical successes in Scotland have ensured that they have always picked up supporters across the British Isles, many of whom have little or no connection to Ireland or Catholicism. Celtic fans develop friendly connections with other clubs who have signed Celtic players in the past, for example with Charlie Nicholas at Arsenal, Paul Lambert at Borussia Dortmund or Kenny Dalglish at Liverpool (see Boyle 2001, p.51). More broadly, in political terms, Celtic acquire followers with left-liberal, counter-cultural, or other radical perspectives who empathize with the club's charitable mission and the Irish nationalism of its supporters' songs. The obvious illustration arises in the supporter friendships established with St. Pauli in Hamburg, a club renowned for a strong following among left-wingers, anarchists, squatters and other radical movements. For the earlier UEFA Cup fixture in Stuttgart, an estimated 500 St. Pauli fans travelled through to support Celtic. Celtic fans' spontaneous participation in local protest movements, such as the anti-government demonstration in Vigo, reaffirms this cultural political element within some supporters' identity.

Socially, Celtic fans constitute a relatively exogenous community that attracts followers who enjoy the expressive, participatory, non-violent elements of passionate fandom. The instance of the four Asian tourists in Seville, as recounted at the outset, is at the extreme end of this identification. This kind

Scottish Affairs

of fandom can be defined, via Maffesoli (1991, pp.12-3; 1999, p.5), as 'neo-tribal' in that it involves fluid, temporary forms of identification, driven by a 'thematic of attraction', within affectively charged social spaces. Inside football, the conversion of this neo-tribal fan identification into something more substantial and deeply held over time is usually dependent upon the team's strong competitive exposure within more international contexts than those afforded by the SPL.

The various identity threads within the Celtic support will experience different fortunes over the next few years as the club's major figures pursue fresh income streams and forums of competition. For the past four years, the Old Firm's major shareholders and directors have been actively seeking new television markets beyond Scotland. The English Premiership – possibly through initial entry to the First Division and then pursuit of promotion – represents the long-standing, favoured option. The Premiership is one of the world's most glamorous league tournaments and through the pan-continental network of television stations controlled by Rupert Murdoch, several live fixtures are beamed weekly across Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australasia. Alternatively, the Old Firm have also looked into the possible founding of an 'Atlantic League' involving major clubs from other small nations such as Portugal, Holland and Belgium, to pool their television audiences more lucratively. While English football officials and UEFA have rebuffed the Old Firm's overtures to transfer fixtures south, supporters overseas appear particularly hopeful that the political economic power of Murdoch's stations within sport will dictate a restructured competition. The UEFA Cup final should be seen, according to one North American fan, as evidence of Celtic's capacity to build pay-TV audiences:

I was at the North American Celtic supporters' AGM when Ian McLeod [former Celtic Chief Executive] was in attendance, and I stood up and asked him when Celtic would be in the English Premiership. 'Within the next three or four years' was what he said. It has to come. It's the TV people that run football now, and what they want they get. I hope that Fox Sport [Rupert Murdoch's North American sports station] look at the final here tonight and think about it. Celtic have shown they've got a massive support. Just think what that television audience could be if they are in the English league.

Moreover, the resolution of a future Old Firm move to England may receive serious political support from the Scottish Executive. In a short interview

Celtic, Cultural Identities and the Globalization of Football

with the author in Seville, John Reid, the current Secretary of State for Health in the UK government and a well-known Celtic fan, insisted that the economic reasons for the Old Firm's switch to England were more pressing than ever and required a visionary Scottish politician to advance a bold agenda:

I went on record about this two years ago. Celtic and Rangers must get into the English league, the Premiership or the Nationwide [English lower leagues], sooner rather than later. If they don't they'll wither away and die. Rangers are reported to be £80 million in debt, and that's simply unsustainable. Both clubs need the television money from big games so that they can compete, otherwise they'll slip further and further behind clubs in bigger European countries. We need to find a way of getting more money to the other Scottish clubs too, and moving to England would help that because of the money that the Old Firm can generate from moving south.

If I were an ambitious young Scottish politician I'd be making a major issue out of this. Scottish football really needs to be sorted out. In the short term, taking this on might be unpopular, but somebody needs to take this on with vision. It's a matter for the Executive, so it's up to Jack McConnell and his people to take it forward.

The Old Firm's pursuit of larger markets and greater international revenues can be understood sociologically in terms of cultural globalization. To begin with, there is the question of whether these extra-national dimensions of Celtic are reflections not of 'globalization', but of 'internationalization'. In prima facie defence of this case, it is assumed that talking of the 'globalization' of an institution is only allowable empirically once it has achieved 'global' reach. Thus, Celtic experience 'internationalization' rather than 'globalization', since their overseas support and corporate growth does not reach all corners of Africa, Asia or Latin America. However, I would advocate an alternative, more subtle definition of globalization, as a very long-term process, indeed one that predates modernity, and which is marked by objective and subjective components. Globalization is characterized by intensified 'time-space' compression and growing consciousness of the world as a single place (Robertson 1992, p.8). All institutional and social actors are party to this process, and football is only one, relatively recent domain of cultural life in which the more elemental aspects of globalization are experienced. The 'global game' of football witnesses time-space compression

Scottish Affairs

in the intensified circulation of media images, players, information, and capital. Competitively, the football 'world' has been a single 'place' at least since British migrants helped spread the game during the belle époque. The construction of particular football identities continues to be a prominent means through which club directors, supporters, journalists and other categories of social actor convey responses to intensified globalization.

According to Robertson (1992, 1995), arguably the founding figure of this field within the social sciences, globalization is marked *inter alia* by interrelated cultural processes of 'relativization' and 'glocalization'. Robertson argues that globalization promotes greater relativization of cultures as social collectives encounter more kinds of different identities from which they mark themselves off more precisely. 'Glocalization' refers to the process by which 'global' cultural practices and phenomena are adapted and reinterpreted by local cultures to suit specific needs. Both concepts reflect Robertson's view that globalization produces cultural heterogeneity rather than homogeneity.

In world club football, we can see relativization occurring as international supporter groups interact with increasing frequency, and so come to project more distinctive cultural identities for their club *vis-à-vis* their rivals. 'Glocalization' arises as each 'local' club culture interprets the global rules and conventions of football in its own way, for example in terms of preferred playing style, the techniques of mass fan support, or in the crowd responses to particular actions by players. In the case of the world's largest clubs, we have to consider the 'local' in a deterritorialized sense, that is, as not simply defined by distinctive geo-political boundaries (see Tomlinson 1999). The Old Firm may play their 'home' fixtures in Glasgow, but the vast majority of their supporters live outside the city, and a sizeable proportion are outside Scotland.

I noted earlier that Celtic possess different supporters with varying social reasons and personal motivations for supporting the club. However, in extending Celtic's corporate development, the relativization and glocalization of the club would be most obviously elaborated through appealing across its Irish 'ethnoscape', mainly as that has been reterritorialized in North America. Since the early 1990s, football has been the growth participant sport among wealthy, educated white Americans. Cracking the North American sports market has been a central objective of football's international governing bodies for at least a decade. Meanwhile, there are some fifty million North

Celtic, Cultural Identities and the Globalization of Football

Americans that claim some kind of Irish ancestry, and Celtic are ideally placed to reach those communities by relativizing the club as quintessentially Irish.

They have a substantial base upon which to build. Celtic's market research suggests they possess nine million fans worldwide, with one million in North America. The North American Federation of Celtic Supporters' Clubs attracts several thousand delegates to its annual general meetings. According to Hugh Adam, the former Rangers director and shareholder, Celtic have a far stronger North American market than any other UK club; this puts Celtic well ahead of Rangers in terms of international potential, but still some way short of matching their ambitions (**The Scotsman**, 2 February 2002). Thus, Celtic's international marketing has shifted strongly towards North America and Ireland, rather than Australia and Asia (**Scotland on Sunday**, 20 July 2003).

For some supporters, the simple scale of Seville confirmed their convictions that Celtic's way ahead is already rooted in the appeal to a reterritorialized Irishness.

For me, this is an Irish club, not a Scottish club. It's an Irish club that just happens to play in Scotland. If you go onto the website for 'Celtic bars' you'll find hundreds of bars all over the world where Celtic fans are welcome. Celtic are one of the biggest clubs in the world, they're probably the biggest in the world. Look at Seville and compare that with the Champions League final. The Italian clubs [Milan and Juventus] didn't bring anything like the supporters that we did to Seville... Celtic have a much bigger potential than the rest of them. Look, Man United signed that deal a few years ago with the New York Yankees in America to help make money over there. Celtic could go a lot further than them. We could go into partnership with the Boston Celtics [leading basketball club], and the Fighting Irish [Notre Dame American college football team].

In an ideal scenario, by cultivating that Irish heritage, Celtic might equip themselves to attract a more international audience, while avoiding the more ephemeral and fickle kinds of 'neo-tribal' fandom that only the largest and most successful clubs can capture through their celebrity players and constant victories in the major leagues and in European competition.

Scottish Affairs

The vast majority of Celtic followers adopt the accommodative view by prioritizing the team's competitive success, and recognizing this is only achieved in contemporary football through maximizing the club's annual turnover by ticket sales, television income and merchandising. Indeed, some Celtic followers differentiate their identities on an economic basis: 'supporters' put money into the club systematically by attending games and buying merchandise, while 'fans' merely favour the team over its opponents.

For a significant proportion of Celtic's support and for more cautious commentators, the realization of a proposed move to England would throw up insurmountable problems. For Scottish-based supporters who regularly attend fixtures, travelling to 'away' games would be extremely arduous and potentially pointless given the difficulty of obtaining tickets for English grounds. Some fans believe that Celtic (rather than Rangers) supporters would face greater, persistent dangers from anti-Irish and right-wing hooligan groups at English clubs. Financial rewards from English television coverage might have to be postponed if the Old Firm were required to start in the lower leagues, to gain promotion into the Premiership. More seriously, the chances of both Old Firm clubs finishing high in the Premiership, to qualify for the Champions League, may be increasingly slim due to the wealth and experience at top clubs like Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool, and Chelsea. Finally, the tougher competition in England might erode the interest of Old Firm followers whose allegiance depends on success.

There are compound concerns that three key elements of the club's identity may be threatened by some structural changes. First, in regard to capitalizing on the club's Irish heritage, some supporters believe the club should avoid going the way of 'glocal' Irish bars that appeal to a crassly invented identity that is culturally alienating. As one London-based supporter explained, 'There are Irish pubs in every city in the world, you're right, but they're full of leprechauns and paddywhackery and all that fake Irish shit. This club isn't like that, it can't be like that. This club has a real history, and it has real supporters.' In a broader sociological sense, the point here is that the club does not need to authenticate its heritage artificially and stereotypically to accord with non-Irish conceptions of Irish ethnic 'traditions'.

Second, by definition, as the Irishness of the club gains greater prominence, important Scottish elements in Celtic's hybrid 'Irish-Scots' identity may become less prominent. Additionally, in the longer-term, the very distinctiveness of Irish-Scots identity itself, as it has been reproduced in the

Celtic, Cultural Identities and the Globalization of Football

West, may be toned down in the more assiduous, gradual corporate reconstruction of the club as an international sports institution.

Third, domestically, there are concerns that the move towards corporate growth has already disenfranchised too many established supporters. Those with larger financial stakes in Celtic, rather than historical ties to the club, have a far better chance of picking up tickets for the biggest fixtures. Poorer, working-class fans are, it is perceived, invariably squeezed out by 'johnny-come-latelys' who were not in the 18,000 home crowds that ineffectual Celtic sides could draw in the late 1980s. As one Glaswegian supporter explained:

The club's support is much more what I would call aspirant working-class. How can an ordinary working-class guy in Glasgow afford the prices they're charging for season tickets? A lot of the people I used to go to games with just can't go now because they can't afford it. With the size of crowds at Celtic you need a season ticket to be sure of getting into a game.

There are suspicions among some Celtic followers that, in taking closer control over the distribution of tickets to away matches, the club is engineering the spectator cohort at these fixtures in favour of wealthier individual fans, and perhaps with the additional incentive to reduce the singing of 'sectarian' songs.

How the advanced commodification of Celtic match tickets relates to the reported growth in the Catholic middle class in Scotland, and impacts upon the club's dominant identity, must remain relatively open questions. On the one hand, across wider Scottish society, surveys reveal that few Catholics identify themselves strongly with Ireland (Brown, McCrone & Paterson 1996, p.201), that systematic discrimination no longer occurs, and that there is much socio-cultural and political convergence between Catholics and Protestants (Rosie and McCrone 2000). In football terms, a sizeable middle-class audience is financially enfranchised to consume Celtic's club products and gain access to prestige fixtures. The habitus of this social class, it might appear, would more readily see the club as a 'lifestyle' interest rather than as a core cultural resource of a socially excluded community. On the other hand, it is no simple matter to establish a direct sociological domino effect linking Celtic, commercialism, Catholicism, class mobility, class habitus and the popular transformation of the club's dominant culture. Celtic's support at fixtures is not exclusively Catholic, nor entirely Scottish-based. However, if

Scottish Affairs

we do prioritize its Catholic followers, some research suggests Scottish Catholics in their early middle age (a prominent cohort within Celtic's support) are the most likely to experience a 'stalling' in labour market equality (Williams and Walls 2000). Finally, one cannot assume a priori that first- and second-generation white-collar workers will automatically acquire a symmetrical, bourgeois leisure identity. They may well reproduce some key elements of their older cultural habitus through their lifelong identification with Celtic, particularly given Glasgow football's deep historical roots in the Scottish working class.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS: PARADOXES AND PRESTIGE FIXTURES

The trip to Seville was evidently a remarkable occasion for Celtic and their supporters, not least in terms of its break with recent football history and the unparalleled numbers of fans that travelled to the edge of southern Europe. But the trip also carried some unavoidably paradoxical consequences. The match ended in defeat, while the team's exhilarating, exhausting run to the final may have contributed to their failure to win any trophies in domestic football. Yet after the final, all supporters that I talked with looked positively on the experience, and said that they had no regrets about attending, that they had enjoyed themselves, and that the game had once more put Celtic back on the international stage. Given the 33-year wait endured, some fans reasonably described the Seville journey as a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity that had to be grasped. Yet, given the very volume of Celtic's support in Seville, and the club's international potential, the possibility of reaching another European final, with some financial assistance from other competitions, should not be restricted to every third or fourth generation.

The social dynamics involving Celtic supporters were highly positive. Seville enabled the fans to translate their sense of belonging to an imagined community into full celebration within a vast communion, while creating some arresting spectacles that did not fracture public order. In relations with other groups, the support established a good accord with Spanish police, delighted the local mayor who raked in some €17.3 million from hosting the event, and made effective and selective use of Scottish media while there. Three months later, UEFA awarded Celtic fans the 'Fair Play' trophy for 2003, in recognition of their activities in Seville.

Celtic, Cultural Identities and the Globalization of Football

In the medium-term, the constellation of identities within the Celtic support will come under different kinds of pressure in regard to the globalization processes that are impacting upon the world's major clubs. The free-market principles upon which elite international football is predicated have particularly jeopardized the participation of poorer or more irregular supporters in the game. It will be interesting to focus on the extent to which, in the pursuit of more international markets, the club's directors may emphasize particular kinds of ethnic identity relative to other religious, national or hybrid identities that are part of Celtic's cultural history.

Most regular Celtic supporters do not expect the club to escape its Scottish confines due to the realpolitik of international football. FIFA and UEFA would struggle to administer the transfer of clubs into new leagues while many English club chairmen have no wish to welcome two more powerful rivals into the top division. For Celtic fans that belong to supporters' clubs and attend fixtures on a regular basis, neither England nor the Atlantic League excites constant discussion. Another SPL season, jousting against Rangers, and some more hope of European progress represent the main foci for the coming year. Yet the hopes of football's international governing bodies to crack the North American market are a matter of historical record. Ironically, those ambitions are certainly undermined by the insistence of the same governing bodies that Scottish clubs should not split into English football. The Old Firm, and in particular Celtic, have a potentially huge following across the Irish and Scottish diasporas across North America, and which could be more fully tapped if televised prestige fixtures in England or elsewhere were to be guaranteed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to many Celtic fans in Spain and in Scotland for their comments and observations. Thanks are due also to two of Seville's leading sports journalists, Mateo Gonzalez and Julio Jiménez, for their insights on Spanish and international football. The paper was significantly improved from a previous draft by the comments of an anonymous referee and the editor, Lindsay Paterson. The research for this paper was financed by the UK Economic and Social Research Council.

REFERENCES

- Boyle, R. (1994) 'We Are Celtic Supporters...: Questions of Football and Identity in Modern Scotland', in R. Giulianotti & J. Williams (eds) **Game Without Frontiers**, Aldershot: Arena.
- Boyle, R. (2001) 'Football and Religion: Merseyside and Glasgow', in J. Williams, S. Hopkins and C. Long (eds) **Passing Rhythms: Liverpool FC and the Transformation of Football**, Oxford: Berg.
- Bradley, J. (1995) **Ethnic and Religious Identity in Modern Scotland**, Aldershot: Avebury.
- Brown, A., D. McCrone & L. Paterson (1996) **Politics and Society in Scotland**, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Devine, T.M. (1999) **The Scottish Nation 1700-2000**, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Durkheim, E. (1915) **The Elementary Forms of Religious Life**, New York: Free Press.
- Finn, G.P.T. (1991a) 'Racism, Religion and Social Prejudice: Irish Catholic Clubs, Soccer and Scottish Society. I – The Historical Roots of Prejudice', **International Journal of the History of Sport**, 8, 1: 70-93.
- Finn, G.P.T. (1991b) 'Racism, Religion and Social Prejudice: Irish Catholic Clubs, Soccer and Scottish Society. II – Social Identities and Conspiracy Theories', **International Journal of the History of Sport**, 8, 3: 370-9.
- Finn, G.P.T. (1994a) 'Faith, Hope and Bigotry: Case-studies in Anti-Catholic Prejudice in Scottish Soccer and Society', in G. Jarvie & G. Walker (eds) **Ninety Minute Patriots? Scottish Sport in the Making of the Nation**, London: Leicester University Press.
- Finn, G.P.T. (1994b) 'Sporting Symbols, Sporting Identities: Soccer and Inter-Group Conflict in Scotland and Northern Ireland', in I.S. Wood (ed.) **Scotland and Ulster**, Edinburgh: Mercat Press.
- Finn, G.P.T. (1999) 'Scottish Myopia and Global Prejudice', *Culture, Sport, Society*, 2(3): 54-99.
- Finn, G.P.T. & R. Giulianotti (1998) 'Scottish Fans, Not English Hooligans: Scots, Scottishness and Scottish Football', in A. Brown (ed.) **Fanatics!**, London: Routledge.
- Giulianotti, R. (1991) 'Scotland's Tartan Army in Italy: The Case for the Carnavalesque', **Sociological Review**, 39(3): 509-532.
- Giulianotti, R. (1995) 'Football and The Politics of Carnival: An Ethnographic Study of Scottish Fans in Sweden', **International Review for the Sociology of Sport**, 30(2): 191-224.

Celtic, Cultural Identities and the Globalization of Football

- Giulianotti, R. (1999) **Football: A Sociology of the Global Game**, Cambridge: Polity.
- Maffesoli, M. (1991) 'The Ethic of Aesthetics', **Theory, Culture & Society**, 8: 7-20.
- Maffesoli, M. (1995) **The Time of the Tribes**, London: Sage.
- Morrow, S. (1996) 'What Price Freedom? Implications for Scottish Football of the Potential Abolition of the Transfer System', **Scottish Affairs**, 15: 83-99.
- Murray, B. (1984) **The Old Firm: Sectarianism, Sport and Society in Scotland**, Edinburgh: John Donald.
- Murray, B. (1998) **Old Firm in the New Age: Rangers and Celtic Since the Souness Revolution**, Edinburgh: Mainstream.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (2002) **The Search for a Viable Playing Field: Financial Review of Scottish Football Season 2000/1**, Glasgow: PricewaterhouseCoopers.
- Robertson, R. (1992) **Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture**, London: Sage.
- Robertson, R. (1995) 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity', in M. Featherstone, S. Lash & R. Robertson (eds) **Global Modernities**, London: Sage.
- Tomlinson, J. (1999) **Globalization and Culture**, Cambridge: Polity.
- Rosie, M. & D. McCrone (2000) 'The Past is History: Catholics in Modern Scotland', in T. Devine (ed.) **Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Scotland**, Edinburgh: Mainstream.
- Williams, R. & P. Walls (2000) 'Going But Not Gone: Catholic Disadvantage in Scotland', in T. Devine (ed.) **Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Scotland**, Edinburgh: Mainstream.

September 2003