

The official football match-fixing prevention discourse as a cognitive limitation (the cases of Iberian countries)

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This paper shows the cognitive and educational limitations of the official institutional discourse to combat match-fixing in football. Recently, after reaching the political and sports' institutional agendas, several reports have been published and official prevention campaigns have been launched to fight against the phenomenon. These documents can be understood as an official preventive narrative on the subject. The discursive analysis of the "nodal points" in which this narrative is based displays a lack of holistic awareness of the problem. Many discursive variables that should be part of the diagnoses are avoided. Likewise, the narrative is presented with a universal character, yet the Iberian cases present evidence that contradict it. Based on interviews to key informants and media clippings, this paper shows that these preventive and educational messages produced by international institutions and sport organizations are not useful in Portugal or Spain because they don't show the reality about this phenomenon.

Introduction

After various scandals, match-fixing has become one of the major problems of the football world. The analysis and prevention of this phenomenon was included in the agenda of several institutions, such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe, Interpol, FIFA, UEFA, EPFL, FIFPro, SportAccord and Transparency International (TI).

In 2011, the Ministers Committee of the Council of Europe issued a statement detailing 49 recommendations to prevent match-fixing. The following year, the Declaration of Nicosia on preventing match-fixing was signed.¹ Also in 2011, FIFA and Interpol signed a cooperation protocol for 10 years and have published several studies assessing the situation. Additionally, the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission has funded several initiatives to study, understand and prevent this phenomenon.²

The above institutions agree that match-fixing undermines the competition's integrity and destroys the sport's spirit, the values associated with it and its economic role. This phenomenon also threatens the continuity of the sports financial machinery due to the loss of potential investors, sponsors and television public interest, generated by the expansion of the problem. Thus, some educational e-learning programmes and prevention campaigns were launched. The objective is to educate the several sports actors (players, coaches, referees and other groups) in order to recognize, resist and report any form of match-fixing.³

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Due to the interrelation between all these institutions and the exchange of information and collaboration in meetings and events,⁴ it can be said that there is a formal institutional official narrative about the problem. This narrative, like all discourse types, is based on “nodal points” that determine the discussion.⁵ Nodal points are ideas around which the discursive possibilities revolve. They determine a semantic battleground in which one can talk about the subject. This leaves out other issues that might relate to the phenomenon. Consequently, “the guiding principles that determine the world view will play a critical role when defining a particular order and the interactions that play therein.”⁶ Thus, the guiding ideas determine what is good, bad, tolerable, fair and desirable for that particular narrative. As Carver pointed out, “discourse is thus the representation of what we want the world to be like, rather than a representation of how the world is.”⁷ Therefore, the “discourse analysis does not look for truth, but rather at who claims to have truth, and at how these claims are justified in terms of expressed and implicit narratives of the authorities.”⁸

This paper analyses the nodal points and key ideas that support the preventive discourse of the main institutions that are officially fighting against the problem. For this purpose, FIFA–Interpol e-learning educational programme, SportAccord prevention materials, EPFL, TI and DFL & DFB Training documents and institutional presentations in forum and meeting were analysed.⁹ All these documents show a limited cognitive narrative of the problem and a lack of a holistic perspective to understand the phenomenon in its entire dimension.

Some contradictory ideas of the official discourse will then be contrasted with the ideas, experiences and narratives of 37 inside actors collected through interviews conducted in Portugal and Spain.¹⁰ The interviewees were former players, former coaches, coaches, former referees, referees, football academy managers, parents of junior players, junior players and sports agents.

This paper is divided into four parts. Firstly, the conceptual problem of the official narrative is presented. Secondly, the key ideas that function as “nodal points” and give symbolic value to the preventive enunciation are pointed out. These are: (1) organized crime as a crime driver; (2) criminal dehumanization of the alleged criminal; and (3) fear as a preventive factor. Thirdly, some data and characteristics of the match-fixing phenomenon in the Iberian cases are presented. These show significant disarticulations between the existing prevention discourse and the reality. The last part and conclusion list variables which are not part of the preventive discourse. Yet if these were part of the discourse, they would help to improve the grasp of the problem and its real dimension. They would also enable a new and effective prevention discourse.

The phenomenon according to the official narrative

Match-fixing is conceptualized as:

irregularly influencing the course or the result of a sport event in order to obtain advantages for oneself or for others (people or institutions) and to remove all or a part of the uncertainty normally associated with the result of a competition.¹¹

For the Council of Europe, the phenomenon is understood as “the arrangement of an irregular alteration of the course or the result of a sporting competition or any of its particular events (such as matches, races) in order to obtain an advantage for oneself or for others and to

remove all or part of the uncertainty normally associated with the results of a competition.”¹² In its e-learning module, Interpol defines match-fixing as “improperly manipulating the result or course of a match for advantage.”

There are two main motivations for match-fixing: sports reasons and economic interests.

On the first motivation, the main intervenients are sports actors such as players, referees, officials, agents and/or technicians. The goal is to obtain favourable results to prevent drops in the classification, to qualify for international competitions, to win championships and more convenient opponents at a later stage in the competition. Thus, the most likely periods for match-fixing are when the above moments are the championships’ defining stages.

The second motivation, the economic interests, is related to gambling. According to the official narrative, this kind of match-fixing has expanded due to the Internet amenities and the rise of online sports betting agencies.¹³ In this second type, besides the sports players who are bribed, threatened or intimidated to do match-fixing, there are also people from outside the sports’ environment involved, who act as bribers. Hence, according to the official discourse, behind match-fixing is organized crime.¹⁴

This type of match-fixing related to the gambling world is a new phenomenon that is not only related to the outcome of the game but also to occasional incidents that happen during the game. The new gambling market not only allows for betting on the final results, but bettors can also place bets in real time on the next cards, penalties and corner kicks. A fixer could therefore bribe, for example, a referee to show a yellow card first to a player of one of the teams. This type of manipulation is known as spot-fixing.

Precisely because of this, TI and DFL¹⁵ pointed out that match-fixing is:

an agreement that is made to intervene in the ‘normal’ course of the match in an improper manner in order to cause a certain event or result. (...) It is important to know that match-fixing does not necessarily involve just the result of the match (win, tie, loss, difference in scores) or the number of scored goals. Individual match events (yellow or red cards, penalties, throw-ins or corners) can be involved.

Thus, the phenomenon related to gambling is what really worries the world of football. It was what prompted the introduction of the issue on the agenda of the European Commission, and it is what the official narrative seeks to combat.

The DFL, on its prevention module used by the EPFL and TI clearly states that its goal is to create a clear understanding and awareness about the dangers and consequences of match-fixing and gambling addiction in order to protect the players and to improve the fight against match-fixing.

The preventive video Match-Fixing – What are the dangers¹⁶ warns that while the problem of match-fixing is not new, and has been part of the sports’ history, “this new phenomenon of globalized gambling linked to the Internet is now the number one danger for the sport’s credibility.” The expansion of new technologies allows people from everywhere to place bets online on competitions all over the world in real time. Thus, this cocktail of variables has determined the conversion of organized crime into a business and transformed match-fixing into a possible place for money laundering (Interpol e-learning).

Asia is the place where the higher bets are made. It is estimated that for a match in the Belgian league, betting in Asia is about 300 thousand euros, while for a match in the English Premier League it is about 1 million and for a World Cup match it is over 1 million euros. Only for the UEFA Champions League 2012 final, a total of over 1 billion euros was bet in Asia. According to CK Consulting, US\$430 billion was gambled globally last year, 80 per cent of which passing through illegal operators.¹⁷ For EPFL and TI, the exponential rise in globalized on-line betting is estimated to be worth more than \$700 billion annually.¹⁸

Match-fixing is more likely to happen when a sport's actor suffers a delay in his wage payment or has financial problems.¹⁹ Declan Hill²⁰ claims that three factors are involved in widespread corruption: the players are paid badly; they perceive that their bosses – the league or team officials – are corrupt; and there are large networks of illegal gambling. In this case, the bigger the number of months in delay the greater the possibility to accept to do match-fixing. On the other hand, there is also the problem of low and uncompetitive wages among the several sports actors, and the problems of gambling addiction that some players may have in the sports world. Thus, friendly games or league games where advancement in the tournament is being played for are the easiest places for match-fixing to happen.

According to Europol, in recent years, match-fixing due to betting was detected in 680 games, 380 of which were played in Europe. Meanwhile, the monitoring that Sportradar has done to UEFA indicates that of the 31,000 games a year that are monitored, suspicious patterns were found in 400 games over the last 3 years. Federbet's report 2014²¹ considered that 510 football matches across Europe were suspected of being fixed during the 2013/2014 season. According to this gambling watchdog based in Brussels, 110 of those matches present clear patterns of manipulation. During the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, there was doubt about a fix of the game between Croatia and Cameroon.²²

Despite this information, there is no comparative data to indicate that the phenomenon of match-fixing has increased either internationally or locally. According to Adrian Colunga, player for the Spanish club Getafe, 'match-fixing has been around forever. Anyone who says otherwise is lying.'²³

In summary, for the official discourse, the main problem is match-fixing linked to gambling (legal and illegal). If this would not happen, everything would seem to be fine in the football world according to this narrative. However, as will be presented, there are other types of match-fixing that do not involve gambling and arise within the institutional framework of football and do not enter this preventive narrative.

Nodal points: key ideas, semantic logic and fictional enunciation

According to this, to create an explanation and prevention narrative, the global problem is isolated from the football world's global reality, and a limited reality where the threat comes only from organized crime groups that favour the gambling world is created. Thus, it has constructed an axiomatized speech based on 'nodal points' defined by the institutions, which determines what can be spoken and marks out the area of discursive possibilities. This leaves out a series of discursive variables that are part of the contemporary football world. However, if they were included, they would substantially modify the official discourse and even delegitimize it.

Following the thought of Edgar Morin, one can say that this is a narrative marked by rationalization. He²⁴ distinguishes two approaches to human reason: rationality and rationalization. Rationality is the ceaseless dialogue between our spirit, which creates logical structures which are applied to the world, and the real world. And when the world is not in accordance with our logical system, there is the need to admit that our logical system is inadequate and covers only part of what is real. On the other hand, rationalization consists in wanting to lock reality into a coherent system and all that is contrary to that coherent system is discarded, forgotten, put aside and seen as an illusion or an impression. In consequence, an arbitrary and limited reality is created, which replaces the complex and global reality. To give a semantic logic to the description, the narrative should provide a number of nodal points that frame the discussion and delineate its discursive extension. There are three basic premises that give structure to the preventive discourse.

(a) – Organized crime as the phenomenon driver

During the launch conference of the project *Staying on side: How to Stop Match fixing*, Graham Peaker, from UEFA's intelligence department, explained his institution's position on the phenomenon. In his presentation, entitled "The Approach of European Football", he pointed out that "match fixers are individuals from the world of Organized Crime (the Mafia, Asian triads and Crime syndicates)" and "financial reward is their only interest." According to UEFA, "the money they use is dirty money; it comes from drug deals, weapon sales, theft and prostitution."²⁵ Moreover, match-fixers "are dangerous people" and the phenomenon "is a form of money laundering." According to Interpol e-learning, match-fixers are mainly members of organized crime. In their educational poster, EPFL, TI and DPF consider that match-fixing works when "criminals bribe people inside sport – a player, a referee or a club official."²⁶

These nodal points exclude other match-fixing arrangements from the official discourse, especially those that are promoted by actors of the sports world with sporting purposes. Or by those who, because of the new situation (financial gain), arise from within the sports' framework. Thus, the holistic discourse about the match-fixing problem is avoided, especially, when match-fixing does not include the intervention of mafia groups. Therefore, the problem is placed outside the institutional football world. This strategy also serves to legitimize the institutional football sphere, which has often been criticized in the last years because of its lack of transparency and the several corruption claims made against it.²⁷ Football institutions are presented in the narrative as incorruptible agents, suffering from this problem while trying to prevent it. This discursive strategy is logical because the inclusion of sports agents as potential corrupters and corrupted, without external pressure, would substantially alter the discursive premise that sports actors are prime defenders of the sports' truth and the love for the sport, another premise on which the official discourse is also sustained.

For example, the central aim of the agreement between Interpol and FIFA is prevention and education. According to these institutions, the better prepared the actors in the football world are, the better able they will be to recognize and to overcome the tactics used by match-fixers.²⁸ This discourse indicates that match-fixing happens due to the sports actors' ignorance of the match-fixers' maneuvers, and assumes that if they were informed, they would refuse to participate in match-fixing. Thus, the preventive institutional narrative would meet this goal: to persuade sports actors of the negative effects of match-fixing. Yet, any other form of discourse

that could account for the loss of sportsmanship or an excessive economic (not sports) interest from sports actors has no place within this narrative.

In addition, to place the world of crime outside sports is to hide or discard the discursive line that mentions the personalities related to criminal groups or non-transparent activities that have entered the football world as entrepreneurs or managers.²⁹

Moreover, it is deliberately linked to the alleged ‘‘criminal groups,’’ which do match-fixing, a variety of criminal activities. Yet, these connections not always are proven. Thus, UEFA’s discourse connects the mafia with prostitution, giving it a negative connotation when considering it a source of dirty money. It is also linked with activities such as drug and/or arms trafficking. Paradoxically, the football world links with prostitution have been constant and well known.

Several players and even managers have found sentimental companions within this framework.³⁰ Certain players³¹ have used prostitution services. Moreover, federations and clubs have historically provided sexual services to referees as a payment.³² In a survey conducted in Portugal, almost half of the referees recognized the existence of prostitute offerings.³³ Furthermore, one of the key points of the investigation of the ‘‘Apito Dourado’’ case was known as the ‘‘Fruit Case.’’ This was the investigation of the systematic use of prostitutes to achieve favours in sports, mainly from referees. Jorge Coroado, former Portuguese international referee, emphasized the existence of this phenomenon.³⁴

If we include these facts, which are outside the official discourse, and maintain the narrative logic, the message would be redefined and we could provide new semantic relationships that would change the overall comprehension:

- (1) The suspicious people or the ones reported as criminals would only have a negative connotation or named as dangerous, when carrying out an activity unacceptable by the football world institutions;
- (2) The football world would also be a source of dirty money, as it would use activities that generate it, such as prostitution;
- (3) When using activities promoted by dirty money (which is later used in illegal betting and match-fixing and ends up in money laundering), the football world would be an accomplice to the problem it seeks to combat.

(b) – Dehumanization of the alleged criminal

A recurring problem in the studies on violence and crime is the dehumanization of the criminal. The majority of the analyses are based on the premise that crime is wrong per se and who commits it is an obscure and condemnable individual. There is no chance to have compassion for the criminal, and one should not try to find ways to justify the criminal’s actions.³⁵

Match-fixing’s narrative continues this phenomenon. Graham Peaker, from UEFA, remarked in his presentation at TI event: ‘‘Never forget we are dealing with people who have no respect for human life.’’³⁶ Yet, this type of comments only denigrates, exaggerates and spreads this idea further. Here, it is done in such a way, as if one could establish a universal criminal profile. Interpol also believes there are recurrent features of match-fixers: they are cross-borders organized groups and are mobile.

The match-fixing promoters appear in this narrative as dangerous people without moral qualms who want to seriously hurt individuals. Interpol–FIFA,³⁷ in its prevention module, leaves some warnings to their students:

Fixers might try to get you addicted to drugs or gambling.
 Fixers will exploit your vulnerabilities or secrets and use blackmail. Addictions, debts and extra-marital affairs are often used to blackmail players.
 Beware of fixers trying to access you and form a false relationship with you.
 Beware of people trying to get you to share inside or sensitive information.
 Beware of offers of gifts, money or ‘honey traps.’
 Debts or addictions put you at risk from fixers.
 The fixers may try to drug you or threaten you.
 Once you’re caught, you are their slave.

In the interviews conducted with key actors, 18 key informants acknowledged knowing of match-fixing cases or of having received proposals to achieve them. Nonetheless, they did not suffer any kind of threats or felt their life was in danger by refusing to do match-fixing. Even when there were problems, these were not related to threats by organized crime groups, but to internal fraud. A former coach of the Portuguese second and third division exposed one case that happened in the 90s where a technical director did not distribute the money he had agreed to get for losing with his players. Because the Portuguese football world is very small, the news spread easily. Moreover, everybody knows each other and there are codes, even for these sport favours. Hence, his story blew up and the technical director had to emigrate.³⁸

In the cases reported in 2013 by Marca newspaper in Spain³⁹, there is no mention of intimidation gangsters who are from outside the sports framework. In Portugal, the recent match-fixing history, including the biggest scandal Apito Dourado, does not incorporate these variables either.⁴⁰ In *Integrity in Sport, Understanding and Preventing Match-Fixing*, SportAccord presents a list of match-fixing historical cases in different sports. Football listed 57 cases worldwide since 2000. The cases come from very different sociocultural conditions, starting from the cases of Albania, Guatemala, El Salvador and Zimbabwe, where corruption and crime are common in all social levels, spreading to those of Italy, Germany and Finland. However, when exploring these stories and each particular case, one perceives that the cruel profile UEFA promulgates applies only to a small number of cases. In most of them, what happened were only cases of match-fixing between sports actors, where Mafia did not intervene directly. Such were the cases that happened in Italy in 2006 and in Portugal in 2007, among others.

In the analysis of violence in the Balkans, Susan Woodward⁴¹ warns that the subjective designation of dangerous and violent to a region or social group brings negative effects. These are mainly two: it affects both the spread of violence and the possibility of groups, which are not necessarily violent, to choose to use violence on the grounds that there is no better option. Thus, these kinds of subjective assignments serve to legitimize the intervention of various groups in the conflict and may mediate all interests.⁴² Social Psychology’s golem effect also confirms that the worse the expectation placed upon a group, the worse they perform.⁴³ It creates a self-fulfilling prophecy; a prediction that, once made, is itself the cause of that reality. This reasoning is not only wrong and dangerous, as it is an obstacle to the real comprehension of the problem and the presentation of useful and effective solutions, but it is also a fracture in the discourse coherence of the educational programmes.

A former mafia member, Michael Franzese,⁴⁴ who is sponsored by FIFA, Interpol and the company he manages, dedicated himself to educate young athletes on how not to be corrupted. He is one of the personalities chosen by these institutions to educate and prevent match-fixing. The real discourse semantics should then be: a gangster has no heart or qualms; he is a dangerous person who is not interested in the individuals' life. Yet, every time he is on the opposite side, and decides to collaborate with what the institutions that define the official preventive narrative consider a good cause, he fills his soul with love, usefulness, intelligence and love for others.

Moreover, Franzese's discourse is also a point that should modify the discursive logic, as it implies that once inside the Mafia, one can leave it smoothly and go back to living a normal life, where one can even achieve recognition and prestige speaking against organized crime. Thus, the same should happen to an athlete involved in match-fixing.

On the other hand, if criminals are such dangerous persons the narrative describes, then the institutional problem worsens because there is extensive research devoted to enumerate the links between institutions that govern football or some football clubs, with people connected with mafia groups, leaders of clubs with turbulent past or present, and high football employees dedicated to enjoy their power positions to do illegal business, influence peddling or corruption.⁴⁵

Interpol explains in its prevention module that:

Where there is a possibility and opportunity to make money illegally, criminals will get involved. The football world has seen a massive growth in the amount of money invested – and generated by – the sport. This has attracted the attention of people for whom football is a vehicle to make money illegally. Many criminals are keen to involve themselves in match-fixing attempts.⁴⁶

Thereby, as Andrew Jennings⁴⁷ has already denounced and recent scandals have shown, several FIFA executives have used football as a vehicle for earning money illegally.

This underlines a discursive logical conclusion. However, for this limited discursive logic, the crime itself is not the problem, it is not the danger. Also, judicial sentences do not matter. What these institutions seem to question are those crimes which come from outside the institutional football sphere and do not benefit people from inside the institutional football sphere. Moreover, by putting the core of the dangers and incentives for fixing matches outside the football sphere, the narrative avoids and does not need to talk about the lack of ethics, transparency and integrity in the football governmental institutional sphere that were denounced.

Finally, a new discursive incoherence in Interpol and SportAccord prevention videos can be pointed out. After Franzese's intervention, the former CIA agent Joe Pistone considers that it is not nice to see an athlete who you think is on the top of the world being wrapped up by a mafia member who "maybe has a fifth grade education." For Pistone, an athlete contacted to fix a match is "a big star, everybody knows who he is," but when faced with a mafia member, he shakes like "jelly."⁴⁸ Again, this discourse seeks to universalize its message based on Manichean stereotypes such as: the bad is inferior and the good is unbeatable; the corrupt mafia member did not finish school; the athlete is a fearful rising star who is corrupted. Thus, the first discursive problem is to consider the lack of schooling as a negative issue: the majority football stars have a low educational level and come from poor neighbourhoods, where people are used to live in violent-prone contexts frequented by mafia members.

The cases of players from South America, Eastern Europe or the African countries exemplify this issue. Surely, the North American reality is different, as the professional leagues recruit players from the college leagues. In consequence, some interviewers in the prevention campaigns are talking about a problem and a reality that they do not know.

Second, the players who have been linked to match-fixing in recent years are far from being famous ‘stars.’ For example, the Belgian goalkeeper Cliff Mardulier, whose story is part of the prevention video, is by no means a globally recognized football player. Most cases listed by SportAccord⁴⁹ follow the same logic, thus, the discourse does an incorrect generalization.

There is still another serious problem. Pistone looks to discredit the mafia members in his communication. Yet, the proposition ‘lack of education’ is discursively linked to ignorance. This creates two problems in the narrative plausibility. First, there is an alleged ‘ignorant former-mafia member’ like Franzese, who is used as a teaching bridge to understand the problem and prevent it. He is also speaking prior to Pistone’s intervention. Thus, it looks like the campaign creators did not understand much about discursive logic. Second, in historical terms, the Iberian case has not presented recurring match-fixing events with non-educated mafia members’ interference. On the contrary, many match-fixers are individuals who are educated, well off, socially respected and who are also in charge of political and sports’ institutions. Such are the cases of the President of Porto Club, Jorge Pinto da Costa; the former president of the Portuguese Professional Football League, Valentim Loureiro, who is also a former soldier and politician; and the former head of Hércules, Enrique Ortiz, among others.⁵⁰

(c)– Fear as a preventive factor

The preventive discourse should be convincing enough to persuade the potential actors not commit the act that the discourse seeks to prevent. Hence, the preventive logic must base its persuasive strength in a credible incentive, easy to be apprehended and understood by the recipient individuals. In this sense, the match-fixing prevention discourse presents a new weak point. Instead of educating individuals towards a better society, through a comprehensive analysis of the situation and the ethics’ role in the establishment of social unrest, the preventive discourse seeks to frighten the athletes, threaten them with a cruel and painful career end.

‘If I am an athlete and I have any connection or any approach by a mafia guy, I’ll be very concerned,’ says former undercover agent Joe Pistone in the prevention module.⁵¹ Interpol uses the same testimony in its prevention material as well. ‘There are many cases of football players and their families and friends being physically threatened,’ considered Graham Peaker.

Interpol–FIFA and SportAccord prevention materials present the story of Cliff Mardulier, the Belgian goalkeeper, who participated in match-fixing and lost his career. According to the goalkeeper, the problem began when his team started to be indebted to the players. Players did not receive their wages and the situation started to become difficult. Finally, a Chinese who was interested in purchasing the club came, but the club was too expensive due to its ranking in the championship, at the sixth position. So, the businessman’s strategy was to make the team lose some games in order to downgrade its place in the table, lowering the club’s price. In exchange he promised to pay all the due wages. Another key motivation was the coach’s encouragement for the players to get involved in match-fixing.

Thus, the players did match-fixing several times. According to Mardulier, when the players wanted to end the farce and refused to continue to do match-fixing, the businessman grabbed the gun, pointed it at him and told him if they did not lose that night they are going to have “real problems.”⁵² Furthermore, in the same educational material, Franzese assures he knows cases of athletes that end in a hospital or were handicapped “in a way that they couldn’t play again.”⁵³ These unfortunate situations are logical to Franzese because “if you have to use the threat of violence or violence itself then you do it.”⁵⁴

According to the Interpol educational module, used by several institutions which offer preventive campaigns on the phenomenon, “once referees/players accept the match-fixier’s offer or become involved with the match-fixer, they will be defenceless and under their complete control... so once you give in, you are under their control” (Prevention module) thus, according to the narrative, if you are an athlete and you get involved with a match-fixer, you become an slave of the fixers.⁵⁵

For the fear rhetoric to work, the recipient must correspond to someone who is vulnerable to such threats. Thus, another discourse point which is problematic is the athlete’s conceptualization as someone who is naive, fearful and lonely. Franzese states with certain distrust in the prevention module:

You would be surprised on how innocent they are (...). They know what they do on the field, but they are very innocent in the gambling business (...). They are pretty easy to exploit.⁵⁶

In consequence, it is possible to see again the same prejudice and disdain that was seen in Pistone’s statements about athletes shaking like a flan where they are in front of a mafia fixer.

If there is any reliable information that contradicts this discursive premise, then the narrative automatically loses its credibility. This is the problem of using the fear logic to mobilize the discourse recipients. There are many well-known examples that demonstrate that this narrative is not true, or at least not completely true. In the Iberian cases, the social imaginary on match-fixing dislocates the official prevention discourse’s credibility: the investigation about match-fixing developed in Spain and Portugal, the usual denouncements about the manipulation of results and the key informants interviewed have never spoken about violence, threats or physical attacks coming from the fixers. In fact, despite the suspects and the proof of match-fixing in football in those countries, there is no evidence or denunciation of someone who has been handicapped, hurt or even killed for being involved in the manipulation of results.⁵⁷ The 18 key informants interviewed that recognized to have known about a fixed game or even have been approached in order to fix a match confirm that they have never heard and/or known about violence. For all of them, match-fixing is something that exists, but it is not common, and it is materialized inside the sport sphere, between colleagues or by political and/or economic influence of the managers. The main objective would be sporting, and not betting and it would be a phenomenon more likely to happen in the lower leagues.

Hence, public narratives of how match-fixing works in these countries are not consistent with the official narrative. Below are some examples.

How match-fixing works in Iberia according to an insiders’ opinion

In order to settle the preventive message, it is important for the preventive narrative to include all the variables spread in the public opinion. That means not only to include the explanation of those

cases involving the organized crime, and where a connection with the world of gambling exists, but also those related to sporting results or those in which only people from the sport's institutional spheres are involved. The problem of the nodal points of the official preventive narrative is that they define a narrow discursive possibility and limit the reality that enters in the discussion of the problem.

According to Franzese, the method used by the match-fixers was to frequent the same bar and nightclubs as the young players. Then address them and invite them for drinks and female escorts. Eventually, when confidence was established, they would face them and say: ‘‘we’re friends, let’s talk business.’’ Then, they would put 10 or 20 thousand dollars on the table and ask them to fix a match.

In the Interpol prevention module for players in the lower leagues, the situation described is one of a player contacted through Facebook by an individual, who after starting a friendly relationship with him, manages to convince him to fix results and then threatens the player. The official narrative lectures about people who look to be friends with the players, earning their trust and then threaten them and make them their slaves.

He would become friends of athletes to get to know their weaknesses/He would supply them with drinks, drugs, and money/Anything to exploit their weaknesses/He would encourage them to go deep into debt/Once an athlete agreed to fix, He would treat them like a slave/If they did not do what he wanted he would use force. (Interpol preventive module)

According to Hill,⁵⁸ good match-fixers act in five steps: the access to the environment, the preparation, the offer to do match-fixing, the performance and development, and the payment. The idea is to use the hierarchies within the team and to get a player who, by history or hierarchy, is able to obtain the support of other team players to realize match-fixing. Hill presents its findings as definitive. For the author it is possible to systematize a universal form of how match-fixers work. Likewise, it is possible to create a general theory on how the drug or arms traffic works, yet this does not account for the dynamics and permanent change the activities incur.

In the Iberian cases, the ways to fix a game would be different and would not involve resorting to extortion. There are match-fixing offers, but these are structured as if they were a love proposal. And in the cases where match-fixing is accepted, whether one party has the victory or defeat, this happens without complaints, retaliation or dangers.

Below are the seven types of fixing described by key informants.

Case 1: The president of a club asks the president and/or players of another club to fix a match. He offers facilities for the acquisition of a player in the next season, money and/or future contracts.⁵⁹ Contacts are made mostly by telephone or through emissaries. If the other part rejects the offer, nothing happened and everything is silenced.⁶⁰

Case 2: Leaders of a team that is about to ascend offered to a player, from the opposing team, money and a two-year contract for the next year if he would commit mistakes in order to lose. Yet, the contract promise is not fulfilled and the player denounces the attempt to do match-fixing.⁶¹

Case 3: Managers and players offer themselves to a rival team to lose, in exchange for money.⁶² A high position official at an important football academy told that he was approached for match-fixing when he was coach of a Portuguese third division team.

“We were close to the promotion. By the end of the championship, a club employee came to see me and explained to me that he knew key people inside our opponent. He can make some diligences in order to make the other team lose. I told him that this was not my business and sent him to talk with the President of the club.”⁶³

Case 4: In a football world where what prevails are exchanges within teams; the players develop friendships and strong connections with teammates, who, in a given time, are on the opposing team. Even players who can be in the same national team are rivals in the national competitions. Thus, match-fixing simply occurs due to the tacit agreement between friends, that at the time of the match the one in need takes the reward for the match-fixing. A former player for both Iberian championships, confirmed that the two times in his career he had offers to do match-fixing were through friend’s contacts with players. In five other interviews, coaches and former player have confirmed this situation. In general, the fix is agreed between the team captains and is openly discussed in the changing room whether to accept it or not. There are cases in which, due to the fixture, players know they will face each other for one of the last games in the season. In these cases, friends can decide at the beginning of the championship that the team which needs it the most will win. Two former players admitted that this type of negotiation often happened but was very difficult to turn into reality.

Case 5: Another type of fixing can occur when a tie is enough for both teams’ challenges. The result can be agreed before or during the game. A former Portuguese player admitted to having gone through this situation in an International Championship. As he explained, this was not a corrupt agreement, but a logical matter because with a tie both teams qualified for the round of 16. Three other former players have also confirmed this.

Case 6: With regards to the Portuguese case, the suspicion towards the referees’ impartiality is a problem present in the media and in the social imagination. During the 2013/2014 championship, in 20 matches days at least one team was considered to be affected negatively by the referees’ acting. The Apito Dourado affair created distrust about referees. According to this case, the corrupt referees received gifts, money, prostitutes or better ratings for doing match-fixing. There was also an institutional scheme to appoint particular referees to particular games. Some public statements confirm the persistence of the suspicions. The president of Sporting Lisbon reported the existence of an institutional structure that systematically favours certain clubs.⁶⁴ A high ranking official of Sporting Football Academy confirmed that they also suffer the wrongdoing of referees in the youth leagues.⁶⁵ A coach of another football academy claimed that there are referees that are friends or have links with clubs, and assured that he knows how each referee will act before the game.⁶⁶ Mario Figueiredo, president of the Portuguese Football League denounced the lack of transparency in the Council of Refereeing.⁶⁷ A former international referee considered that the problem is a psychological corruption due to the economical differences between clubs. “It is very easy to give a penalty in favour to Benfica or Porto, but you have to be very sure to give one against them if you do not want to have problem.”⁶⁸ In the same direction, Figueiredo clamored for more transparency in refereeing.⁶⁹

Case 7: Football is a business, and no more simply a game. Coaches and managers of football academies denounce the power that football agents have nowadays on players’ behaviour, creating a possible source of match fixing. Two agents recognized that they are willing to influence in their players in order to defend their economic interests and financial actives. This

includes convincing his players to refuse playing a game, to play individually without thinking about the team, to influence the coach. The match-fixing prevention narrative lacks a wider comprehension of the potential role of agents and third owner partnerships as opportunity structures for match fixing. As seen, all these examples do not follow the patterns expressed in the official preventive narrative. On the other hand, payments of incentives for winning are well received regardless the origin of the money. “If you give me something to win, that is acceptable, but if you give me to lose it is not,” considered a former Portuguese international player. In general, all the interviewees believe that there is nothing wrong in accepting money in order to win.

Conclusions

Match-fixing has become one of the major problems of the football world. The political and sports institutions have provided an official narrative to prevent match-fixing. This narrative describes the problem, explains its causes, consequences and development and provides a basis for prevention campaigns. The “nodal points” of this narrative preclude the admission of variables which could be related to the problem. If these were incorporated, they would modify or distort the official discourse. This limited discourse, which places the instigation of match-fixing outside the football world and relates it primarily to the gambling and crime world, does not account for most of the Iberian reality. In the region, match-fixing would be motivated primarily for obtaining sports advantages and is materialized by actors of the football world, without the influence of mafia gangs and violence. In this sense, this paper is a pioneer in analyzing the institutional preventive diagnostic, while it compares it with the local discursive realities. Given the nature of the subject matter, there is a lack of significant empirical data, which makes a scientific research difficult on the subject. Therefore, the interview techniques used for this article, as well as the contrasting discursive technique, are effective in striving for a better understanding of the materialization processes. Thus, it is possible to construct better narratives, which grasp the problem’s complexity comprehensively, enabling the development of new and better education and prevention programmes.

Acknowledgements

This article continues the research started in Portugal with the project *Staying on side: How to stop match-fixing*, funded for the DG Education and Culture of the European Commission (EAC-2012-0568). It ran from January 2013 to June 2014. The initiative was coordinated by Transparency International, EPFL and the German Football League (DFL), who joined forces on an 18-month project to help prevent match-fixing through education and awareness raising. The project aimed to develop educational and prevention programmes and materials that can be used by the Football Leagues across Europe to address all target groups including young players, professionals and match officials. For more information, visit Transparency International’s webpage of the project: http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/activity/staying_on_side_education_and_prevention_of_match_fixing. The author would like to thank all the participants in the project *Staying on side* for the productive debates and the research team in Portugal, including Catarina Rebelo, Nina Wiesehomeier and Rita Teixeira-Diniz. I would like also to thank TIAC’s (TI Portuguese Chapter) authorities, Luís De Sousa and

João Paulo Batalha. Thanks to all of those who have accepted to be interviewed and the peer reviews of Soccer & Society for their interest comments.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

¹ Council of Europe, *Nicosia Declaratio*: <http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/documents/eusf2012-nicosia-declaration-fight-against-match-fixing.pdf>

² In 2013, DG Education and Culture funded projects on match-fixing prevention coordinated by a) TI, EPFL and DFL; b) Institute of International and Strategic Relation and European Lotteries; c) FIFPro; d) EU Athletes; d) International Rugby Board. See http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/organisation_of_sport/match_fixing_en.htm

This article continues the research started in Portugal with the project *Staying on side: How to stop match-fixing*. The initiative was coordinated by TI, EPFL and the German Football League (DFL). (http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/activity/staying_on_side_education_and_prevention_of_match_fixing).

³ The framework involved the partnership with FIFA and INTERPOL, and developed e-learning programs on Integrity in Sport. The programs contain different modules to educate a particular audience: young players, professional players, referees, coaches and managers (<http://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Integrity-in-Sport/Integrity-in-sport/E-learning2>). SportAccord also released its online learning module (<http://realplayer.sportaccord.com/>) using the same sources and interviews as Interpol. It also made the video for prevention: “Match - Fixing. What are the dangers?” (<http://www.sportaccord.com/en/what-we-do/sports-integrity/>). Meanwhile, EPFL, TI and DFL have developed learning modules and materials for prevention workshops (http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/activity/staying_on_side_education_and_prevention_of_match_fixing)

⁴ These organization together have taken part of several events (such as 5th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport or the *Staying on side: How to Stop match-fixing* project kick of meeting) and promote a general homogenous discourse. See as an example: http://www.transparency.org/files/content/activity/21Mar2013_StayingOnSideConferenceReport_EN.pdf

⁵ Žizek, *El sublime objeto*, 126.

⁶ Moriconi, *Retórica*, 43.

⁷ Carver, *Discourse Analysis*, 51.

⁸ Ibidem, 52.

⁹ For Interpol e-learning see: <http://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Corruption/Integrity-in-sport/E-learning2>; <http://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Integrity-in-Sport/Integrity-in-sport/E-learning2>; for Interpol Report, http://www.interpol.int/.../E%20TNA%202013_FINAL.pdf; SportAccord, *Model Rules*; SportAccord, *Integrity in Sport*; <http://www.sportaccord.com/en/what-we-do/sports-integrity/> SportAccord, *Match-Fixing - What are the dangers*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23BdVV8Ow6o&list=PLIEubhMUJZnJvJ6_rbEGT_BIDrwMeNnV3&index=4; DFL & DFB, *Don't Fix*; http://www.epfl-europeanleagues.com/files/Integrity_in_Sport_poster.pdf; http://www.transparency.org/files/content/activity/2013_IntegrityInSport_poster.pdf

¹⁰ Tremblay, *The Key Informant Technique*. Some of those interviews were carried out during the development of the project *Staying on side: How to stop match-fixing*. Some interviewed have developed their career both in Spain and Portugal, as well as other countries.

¹¹ SportAccord, *Model Rules*, 1.

¹² Council of Europe, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)10*, 3.

¹³ See SportAccord video *What are the dangers* and Interpol, *Match-fixing in Football*, 6.

¹⁴ Interpol and FIFA, SportAccord, UEFA, EPFL and TI has emphasized this statement. See http://www.epfl-europeanleagues.com/files/Integrity_in_Sport_poster.pdf See European Commission consideration as well. http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/organisation_of_sport/match_fixing_en.htm

¹⁵ DFL & DFB, *Don't Fix*, 7.

¹⁶ SportAccord, *What are the dangers*, min. 1:09.

- ¹⁷ On line: www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/pressrels/2013/uniscp729.html
- ¹⁸ http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/activity/staying_on_side_education_and_prevention_of_match_fixing
- ¹⁹ See FIFPro, *Black Book*.
- ²⁰ Hill, A critical mass.
- ²¹ On line: http://federbet.com/media/Federbet_report_v3.pdf
- ²² On line: <http://www.economist.com/news/international/21606883-not-even-games-grandest-tournament-free-allegations-rigging-how-high-does-it>
- ²³ Fernández, *Las cloacas de la Liga*.
- ²⁴ Morin, *Introducción al pensamiento complejo*, 102.
- ²⁵ For a summary of what have been said during the presentations see the Meeting Report. On line in: http://www.transparency.org/files/content/activity/21Mar2013_StayingOnSideConferenceReport_EN.pdf
- ²⁶ Interpol e-learning, op. cit. See also: http://www.epfl-europeanleagues.com/files/Integrity_in_Sport_poster.pdf
http://www.transparency.org/files/content/activity/2013_IntegrityInSport_poster.pdf
- ²⁷ During the last years, several insider football actor, such ex-players, have denounce corruption and/or abuse of power in FIFA. For one example: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/world-cup/11009801/Gary-Lineker-Fifas-corruption-makes-me-feel-sick-Sepp-Blatter-runs-it-like-a-dictatorship.html> For research in this issues, see Aguilar, *Jogada Illegal*; Jennings, *Foull*; and/or Yallop, *How they Stole the Game*.
- ²⁸ Interpol. Match-fixing in Football, 3.
- ²⁹ Aguilar, *Jogada Illegal*, 14 and Hill, *Mafia no Futebol*, 15 and 17-20.
- ³⁰ For the case of Portugal see Salgado (2006) a biography of a former prostitute who had a relation with the president of Porto Football Club, Jorge Pinto da Costa.
- ³¹ Some have ended in scandals. Such cases are the case of the French Karim Benzema and Franck Ribery with the young prostitute Zahia Dehar, who was under aged.
- ³² Hill, *Mafia*, 149.
- ³³ TIAC, *Manipulação de resultados*, 16.
- ³⁴ Interview with the author. January 21th, 2014.
- ³⁵ Moriconi, *Ser violento*, 89.
- ³⁶ http://www.transparency.org/files/content/activity/21Mar2013_StayingOnSideConferenceReport_EN.pdf
- ³⁷ E-Learning program: How to Prevent Match-Fixing from Destroying your Career.
<http://www.interpol.int/ipsgapp/integrityinsport/elearning/module01/index.htm>
- ³⁸ Interview with the coach of a team which plays the National Junior Championship, available for betting in *Bwin.com*. In order to protect his club, he asked for anonymity.
- ³⁹ See Fernández's articles: *Las cloacas de la Liga*; *Pernía a Boadas*; and *Agapito bajo sospecha*.
- ⁴⁰ For a complete explanation of the case see De Melo, *Apito Dourado*.
- ⁴¹ Woodward, *Violence Prone Area*.
- ⁴² Moriconi, *Desmitificar la violencia*, 629.
- ⁴³ See Rosenthal and Jacobson, *Pygmalion*; and Inamori and Analoui, *Beyond Pygmalion effect*.
- ⁴⁴ For over 20 years, Franzese was a high- ranking member of the Colombo crime family in New York. He committed match-fixing in several sports' events.
- ⁴⁵ For more information see Dempsey *et. al.*, *Big Money, Beautiful Game*; Aguilar, op. cit, 84; Hill, A critical mass, 17. You can also subscribe Andrew Jennings blog <http://www.transparencyinsport.org/>
- ⁴⁶ <http://www.interpol.int/ipsgapp/integrityinsport/elearning.html>
- ⁴⁷ Jennings, *Foull*
- ⁴⁸ Interpol e-learning preventive video, minute 1:30. Available on line:
<http://www.interpol.int/ipsgapp/integrityinsport/elearning/module01/index.htm?l=es&iid=welcome>
- ⁴⁹ SportAccord, *Integrity in Sport*.
- ⁵⁰ http://www.laverdad.es/murcia/v/20100729/deportes_murcia/mas-futbol/hercules-trato-comprar-cordoba-20100729.html There are also cases coming for other sports of famous stars that recognize after retired that they have fixed matches, as the case of Andre Agassi in his biography.
- ⁵¹ SportAccord, *What are the dangers*, min. 8:17
- ⁵² Ibidem, min. 6:19.
- ⁵³ Ibidem, min. 2:42
- ⁵⁴ Ibidem, min. 2:35.

- ⁵⁵ Ibidem, min. 3:42.
- ⁵⁶ Ibidem, min. 3:16.
- ⁵⁷ Also the level of condemnation is low. Regarding *Apito Dourado*, there are still criticism for proof and evidences, such as phone taps that are still available in Internets, that were not uses or taking into account by the court.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9H21iyykeA>
- ⁵⁸ Hill, How Gambling Corruptors Fix, 416.
- ⁵⁹ See <http://www.marca.com/2013/08/09/futbol/2adivision/1376041744.html> and http://elpais.com/diario/2010/08/03/deportes/1280786402_850215.html
- ⁶⁰ See <http://www.marca.com/2013/05/31/futbol/1369998864.html> and <http://www.marca.com/2013/05/28/futbol/1adivision/1369772119.html>
- ⁶¹ See <http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/detalhe/noticias/sport/desporto/desportivo-de-chaves-sob-suspeita>
- ⁶² See <http://www.marca.com/2013/05/28/futbol/1adivision/1369772119.html>
- ⁶³ Interview with the author. 15th February 2014.
- ⁶⁴ http://www.record.xl.pt/Futebol/Nacional/1a_liga/Sporting/interior.aspx?content_id=872206
- ⁶⁵ Interview with the author.
- ⁶⁶ Interview with the author.
- ⁶⁷ TIAC, *Manipulação de resultados*, 12. See also http://www.record.xl.pt/Futebol/Arbitragem/interior.aspx?content_id=849278
- ⁶⁸ Interview with Jorge Coroado.
- ⁶⁹ http://www.record.xl.pt/Futebol/Arbitragem/interior.aspx?content_id=883433

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