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# Cultures of Memory in Football Fanzines

A Content Analysis



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## ***Abstract***

The increasing insecurity in the English society is countered by a resurgence of nostalgia and remembering the old times. This phenomenon can be found in football, too, but it differs from the need for nostalgia that is visible in society. High Street shops like Past Times are hugely successful in selling commodities that remember the English Commonwealth with goods from the countries that once belonged to it. Also, this becomes visible by the many replica items of daily life that are designed in a retro style but contain modern technology such as radios, watches, alarm clocks and furniture. Football fans can purchase replica shirts of their favourite club from the seventies and even earlier.

In the field of football, the introduction of the Premier League in England has changed the face of football massively. After the Heysel and Hillsborough disasters football fans got active themselves and started to publish football fanzines. In these outlets they mostly opposed the view that every football fan is a hooligan. They also used football fanzines as a platform to remember their heroes and glories of eras long gone. For this reason cultures of memory did become a part of football fanzines and did so very vivid.

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## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this study is to show to what extent cultures of memory are important parts of the content of football fanzines and how they are exercised. It will also be discussed why these cultures of memory are an important part in the fanzines and for the people involved in the production of fanzines. The literature review in chapter one highlights the strength and weaknesses of written accounts on football fanzines and also examines concepts of memory that deliver an explanation for the use of cultures of memory in football fanzines. These include theories by Maurice Halbwachs who is acknowledged as the founding father of the field of collective memory. Pierre Nora takes this idea and adapts it to the collective memory of a nation, here France. Aby Warburg investigated how in Western European countries a pictorial memory has been developed over the course of the last 500 years through which pictures and images from the ancient past are recycled.

The sociological perspectives that will be presented here are used to give possible explanations about why there are cultures of memory in the content of football fanzines. Norbert Elias work on established and outsider relationships will be used to explain why football fans separate themselves from ordinary spectators in football stadia. He further looked at power relationships in this context. Also, the idea of a civilizing process is looked at and explained if such a thing had taken place among football fans to become producers and editors of football fanzines.

Throughout the work the history of football fanzines will be highlighted. This has partially been done by some writers mentioned in the literature review. These accounts examine the history of the fanzines until the mid-1990s. English football saw

massive changes in the 1990s in the wake of the Taylor Report (1990) and with the introduction of the Premier League in 1992. Therefore the fanzines not only offered a platform for discussion of what has changed for them, but also the editors took the time to remember the favourite players of the supporters, their views of the past and to publish their opinion on club issues as well as footballing ones, that means match reports and a critical judgement of the players' performance by the writers. In most of the literature mentioned in chapter one the 1990's are described as the heydays of football fanzines. Something that Boyle and Haynes describe as harking back to a more secure, less complex society (2000:202). In their point of view the fans themselves become historians of the game and their club.

The third chapter introduces the methods applied to the dissertation to find out about the presence of cultures of memory. This is done by way of a content analysis. All relevant categories of memory are presented here and were sought for in the content of the fanzines examined. These will be found in Appendix 1. The results from this chapter will be found in Appendix 2. There is a table which lists all fanzines examined and all categories of memory combined and it will be shown if these categories are part of the content of football fanzines or not.

Chapter four is dedicated to the explanations for the findings from the preceding chapter. As the sample for the study is split into two, one part examining the 1990s the other fanzines from 2000 onwards we can draw conclusions about the development of football fanzines since the mid-1990s. Therefore, the history of fanzines is continued in this chapter, although this dissertation does not intend to give a chapter on the history of

football fanzines. But to split the sample and examine the fanzines proved useful to outline the history of fanzines in the time period examined.

Chapter five brings a discussion about whether or not the theoretical framework can be approved of or if the theories outlined are not useful and if football fanzines do not contain cultures of memory at all. In any case it is analyzed why that is and what possible conclusions can be drawn from it for the further exploration of football fanzines and cultures of memory.

In the appendices there is a list of fanzines as well as a table that shows the results of the content analysis