

---

## 'A Small Country with a Big Ambition'

### Representations of Portugal and England in Euro 2004 British and Portuguese Newspaper Coverage

■ *Raymond Boyle and Cláudia Monteiro*

#### ABSTRACT

■ This article examines the way aspects of Portugal and Portuguese culture and society are talked about in and around the media coverage of a major international sporting event. It focuses on how things other than sport get talked about against the backdrop of a major international sporting and media event, and how these discourses connect with wider political, economic and cultural frames of reference. The research draws from newspaper coverage of Euro 2004 in the Portuguese and British newspaper markets. It examines the distinctive news sports agendas in both countries and shows how there is a growing distinction between the more European style of sports journalism in the British broadsheet/compact market and that of the tabloid newspapers in this country. It also outlines the differing versions of Portugal presented to the world from within two differing European newspaper markets. ■

**Key Words** Euro 2004, identity, journalism, newspapers, Portugal

The revolutionaries who toppled Portugal's right-wing dictatorship in 1974 saw football as an opiate of the people, cynically manipulated by the regime to entertain the masses and divert their attention away from politics.

Few could have imagined that, 30 years on, a democratic Portugal would have elevated football almost to religious status, becoming a global

---

Raymond Boyle is a member of the Stirling Media Research Institute at Stirling University, Stirling, FK9 4LA, Scotland. [email: raymond.boyle@stir.ac.uk]

Cláudia Monteiro is a research fellow at the Stirling Media Research Institute.

---

*European Journal of Communication* Copyright © 2005 SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi) www.sagepublications.com, Vol 20(2): 223–244. [10.1177/0267323105052299]

---

shrine for a sport that will attract up to 1.5m visitors and billions of television viewers for this month's Euro 2004 championship.

Never have the Portuguese been under such intense international attention. (Peter Wise, 'Putting their Best Foot Forward', *FTP Portugal, Financial Times*, 9 June 2004)

## Introduction

This research is focused on newspaper coverage of the UEFA European Football Championships (Euro 2004) – an international competition held every four years – that took place between 12 June and 4 July 2004 in Portugal. However, this is not an article about football, or even to a large extent about media coverage of the game, although clearly elements of this practice do feature. Rather it examines the way aspects of Portugal, Portuguese culture and Englishness are talked about in and around the media coverage of a major international sporting event and how these discourses connect with wider political, economic and cultural frames of reference.

Examining both the British and Portuguese newspaper markets, the research draws on previous related work in this area by Blain et al. (1993), O'Donnell (1994), Puijk (1996), Garland and Rowe (1999), Alabarces et al. (2001) and Crolley and Hand (2002).

As part of their European-wide study of sport and national identity in the media, Blain et al. (1993) examined Portuguese media coverage of the 1992 Olympics held in Barcelona. These Games turned out to be the poorest for the country since 1976, with Portugal failing to win a medal of any description despite sending 100 athletes to Barcelona. This sporting failure provoked a crisis of confidence among the Portuguese press. As Blain et al. (1993: 179) note:

In the end, the failure of the Barcelona Olympics and the longing for the great athletes of the past (especially Carlos Lopes and Rosa Mota) becomes yet another expression of Portuguese *saudosismo*, a 'longing for the past' which is often presented (by the Portuguese themselves) as an integral part of the Portuguese character and culture stretching back into the mists of time.

In this research, we examine the extent that coverage of Euro 2004 displayed a similar level of anguish over the performance of both the national team, and the country's ability to stage a major international sporting and media event.

A key discourse evident in media coverage of the 1992 Olympic Games was a fixation with Portugal's place in the world, and in particular

its inability to compete with the European sporting elite. As Blain et al. (1993: 182) suggest:

Part of the anguish surfacing in the Portuguese media comes from a feeling of having failed to meet European standards, those of its own 'geographic/economic' space, and of having been relegated to what it sees as peripheral status.

This particular discourse, one which equates sporting success with political and economic status, is of course not unique to Portugal, and is a particular trait of smaller countries, often living cheek by jowl with a larger and more politically and economically potent neighbour. As we note later, a concern with connecting the country's ability to successfully stage a major international football and media event, as well as enjoying success on the pitch, to Portugal's wider place on the European political stage would be much in evidence before and during media coverage of the tournament.

In similar fashion to the types of interpretations evident in the Portuguese press during the last international event held in that country – the World Expo '98 – Euro 2004 became an instrumental discourse for a nation which aspires to a post-Iberian, post-peripheral interpretation. Caught between the historical myths of the defunct empire that inform the fabric of Portuguese banal nationalism, and the aspirations for a full acknowledgement of its European status, the tournament becomes a discursive vehicle for a display of performance. Not simply the national team's performance, but also that of the nation.

### Methods and context

This study focuses primarily on the media coverage of Euro 2004 in the UK and Portuguese press. A representative sample of newspapers were looked at across the broadsheet/tabloid markets in both countries.<sup>1</sup> We were particularly interested in the way in which Portugal, the Portuguese and the English were talked about and made sense of in the British and Portuguese press. This required an analysis of the sports, news, comment, magazine and features sections of the press. The British dimension allowed us to get a sense of how those 'looking in' made sense of the country and its culture, while, by way of comparison, the Portuguese focus of the study enabled us to examine how the domestic press covered the biggest international media and sporting event held on Portuguese soil, the view, if you prefer, from 'within'.

We were interested in identifying the key themes and discourses to emerge from coverage of this international sporting and media event.

How do newspapers help to make sense of the cultural importance of such an event? To what extent are the range of representations offered consistent within and across newspaper markets?

A couple of points relating to differing media markets are worth making at this point. In the UK, there remains a division within the national press between broadsheets (quality) newspapers and the tabloid (popular) press (Bromley, 1998; Sparks, 2000). This division in terms of readership, sales, advertising, price and news values is becoming more complex as a number of broadsheet newspapers, most notably *The Independent* and *The Times*, roll out a 'compact' version, which, they argue is a 'quality' paper in tabloid format. For other commentators, the rise in the importance of sports journalism in the broadsheet press is itself symptomatic of a wider decline in journalistic standards (Franklin, 1997).

Traditionally, the tabloids have carried extensive sports coverage at the more sensationalist end of the market, while the broadsheets have only really begun to increase their more sober coverage of sport substantially since the 1990s (Boyle and Haynes, 2000: 165–86; Boyle, forthcoming). In the UK, no substantive daily sporting press exists as it does elsewhere in Europe, including Portugal, partly as a result of the daily national press having devoted so many resources and so much energy into covering sport. To further complicate matters, a distinctive national press exists in Scotland, which also includes 'Scottish' versions of many of the London-based nationals, and a healthy distinct Sunday market exists in the UK, something less common elsewhere in Europe.

Sports are a feature of newspapers across the Portuguese market. This includes the financial press, with dedicated pages examining the business of sports. In a country with low rates of newspaper readership, the daily sporting press takes up the largest share of the market with three daily titles. The oldest among them – *A Bola* – enjoys the largest circulation.

The first section of this article tracks the coverage given to the wider political and economic backdrop against which Portugal prepared to stage the tournament. The following section then examines how the British press represented Portugal and the Portuguese across the newspaper market. Section three, by way of comparison, tracks the Portuguese coverage of the England fans who visited the tournament. The final section then examines some of the central themes that emerged from the overall coverage and how these connect with other established ideas relating to discourses of national identity.

## Euro 2004, more than football?

### *Portugal and national identity*

Discourses of national identity in Portugal cannot be understood without taking into account the relationship between arguments about social and economic decline related to the 19th century and the hyperbolized version of history that is presented daily by the contemporary education system, numerous official celebrations (such as the caravels in the opening ceremony of Euro 2004) and governmental cultural policies. These discourses were reproduced throughout the 20th century and are still visible today.

Recent research about the discursive role of international events in the imagination of the Portuguese nation is strongly defined by this past/future dichotomy. Whether the national football team is playing in international sports competitions or Portugal is hosting Expo '98,<sup>2</sup> the elements of the glorious past intertwine with the search for some form of post-peripheral identity, and wider European recognition of the economic progress that the country has made.

As the Portuguese team secured its first victory against the Russians after the disastrous opening match against Greece, images of Portuguese homes waving the national flag and face-painted fans dancing in the streets until the early hours provided a perfect backdrop for the mediated story of another great football tournament and its enthusiastic host country. This was the picture of a nation in communion, as sports daily newspaper *Record* phrased it in the piece 'Medalhas': 'Congratulations to the country, the people and the team. The flag was the symbol of an impressive demonstration of national union' (*Record*, 4 July). However, despite this popular enthusiasm, a close inspection of the debates held in the press just weeks before the tournament offer a very different portrait of the nation.

### *Euro 2004: economy and politics*

The threat that industrial action by the public sector might disrupt the staging of the tournament was much in evidence in the run-up to Euro 2004. Increased fiscal prudence by the Social Democratic government had generated considerable industrial unease, with hospitals and border control services warning of possible strikes.

The government characterized any industrial action as the selfish pursuit of professional groups set against the wider collective needs of the nation.

With the Portuguese sports press, however, playing its traditional role of nation-builder, it was left to the financial press to investigate the costs involved in building the 10 stadiums needed for the tournament.<sup>3</sup> The government justified the €600 million bill to a country undergoing tight deficit control<sup>4</sup> by guaranteeing that the project would be funded mostly through local government (*municípios*) and private monies. However, financial experts in charge of monitoring the economic impact predicted that some *municípios* would have no means of repaying the large amounts borrowed to finance new or improved stadium structures (*negócios.pt*, 14 June).

Public debate in the quality press exposed the tournament as a demonstration of the strength of the construction lobby in Portugal, and its ties with local administration and football bosses. Reflecting on the dynamics of this lobby (commonly known as *patos-bravos*, or 'wild ducks'), Conservative columnist Vasco Graça Moura wrote in *Diário de Notícias*:

[Construction] promoters have opened their large purses and enjoy a privileged status. They mundanely coexist with mayors and top public servants, football bosses and the police, political heavyweights and others who are irreplaceable to their public relations activities. They host and nurture them, and repay generously the succession of favours which they are granted. (*Diário de Notícias*, 5 May)

Interestingly, such is the rather insular nature of much of the British press that, with the exception of the financial desks at the broadsheet press and the *Financial Times* in particular, the arrest of 16 referees and football executives in late April, including Valentim Loureiro the chairman of the Portuguese Football League, in a major corruption probe went largely unreported. Internal issues of political and economic corruption were not a major concern in the British press in the run-up to the tournament. In contrast to the regular scare stories that circulated in the British media with regard to the problems the Greeks were having in completing Olympic venues in time for the 2004 Athens Games, construction debates and the reporting of political chicanery associated with Euro 2004 were largely absent in Britain. Some of the issues were addressed by both the *Financial Times* (9 June) and in two pieces by Alistair Grant – 'All Roads Leading to Portugal' – and Simon Inglis – 'Giving Grounds for Approval' – carried by *The Times* in their football supplement *The Game* (7 June).

In the Portuguese press, the discourse of the tournament as an economy booster and promoter of tourism revenues was a recurrent topic. But the announced increase in the tourism trade was not as straight-

forward as anticipated: in the popular Algarve, tourist revenues did not increase and even diminished in some cases (*negócios.pt*, 25 June). Moreover, a number of holiday packages to Albufeira in the Algarve were cancelled once the trouble involving English fans began (*Público*, 19 June).

In late May, Morgan Stanley's report on economic growth in Portugal considered the benefits of hosting the Euro 2004 tournament as 'marginal' (*publico.pt*, 29 May). The Portuguese government's own unit for economic research and forecast confirmed in late June the low impact expected from the event. With an estimated contribution of 0.08 percent to GDP in 2004, the economic results could be significantly lower than those obtained with the previous international event hosted in the country, Expo '98 (*negócios.pt*, 23 June). However, by way of contrast with such disappointing figures, Minister José Luis Arnaut was praising the economic benefits of staging such a tournament, pointing out that hosting Euro 2004 was going to 'promote the Portugal brand as a modern and enterprising nation' (*Diário de Notícias*, 17 June).

Stories contesting the economic orthodoxy of Euro 2004 were mainly discussed in the Portuguese financial press; however, questioning the viability of the tournament declined as June approached, and the press adopted the role of national cheerleader as the rest of Europe arrived in Portugal.

In the UK press, discussions of the political and economic implications for Portugal of staging the tournament were of little concern to their readers. With England having qualified for the tournament in Portugal, the newspapers had other things on their minds.

### **Discourses of Portugal, football and economy in the British press**

Although the focus of this article is concerned with newspaper coverage of Portugal we want to start this section with a newspaper advert which appeared in *The Times* on 9 June, just three days before the start of the tournament. While the advert is for a national commercial radio station, TalkSPORT, and its forthcoming coverage of Euro 2004, its message and mode of address neatly encapsulate one of the pre-tournament discourses centred on Portugal and the Portuguese people and its economy.

The advert has a picture of two men, hats shielding their eyes from the sun, with a mule that is ploughing what looks like a very arid piece of land. It appears to be a posed shot for the camera; a picture of rural poverty somewhere on the eastern-most fringes of Europe perhaps.

The text reads:

Portugal is one of the poorest countries in Europe, its largely agrarian economy at the mercy of drought during hot Iberian summers. However, the arrival of Euro 2004 has signalled an upturn in the fortunes of Jorge Ibanez and his son Sergio, who have won an exclusive contract to supply half-time oranges for the tournament. 'It's a sixteen hour round trip to the stadium,' explained Ibanez senior, 'and my mule is old and slow. But I make my son do it, so it's really not my problem.'

It then concludes:

Also working a 16-hour day during the tournament are the TalkSPORT team, bringing you live match commentary and all the latest news and views. But they'll get paid a damn sight more than Jorge will for his oranges.

The piece is obviously meant as an ironic and humorous take on the state of Portugal and its economy. Yet it also symbolically reinforces one of the dominant perceptions of that country in sections of the British press. This views Portugal as a poor, backward, southern European country, with plenty of sunshine – and thus good for a relatively cheap holiday. The country is the antithesis of cosmopolitan, industrial, high-tech and sophisticated Britain. It is the sort of image to make those charged with promoting Portugal 'the brand' to the rest of the world, weep. Yet both in image and text the advert simply reproduces the dominant myths and discourses that parts of northern Europe still harbour about their southern counterparts (O'Donnell, 1994).

It is also a deeply misleading and inaccurate picture of Portugal in 2004. While there are clearly economic problems facing the country, the image presented belongs to another era. For example, the advert talks about Portugal's 'largely agrarian economy'; however, according to the World Bank, in 2000 Portugal's agricultural sector actually accounted for just 3.8 percent of the country's economy, with the service sector worth 65.6 percent. To add insult to injury, the advert's main character actually carries a Spanish, rather than a Portuguese surname. Perhaps they all sound alike?

However, a small section of the British press presented a very different Portugal to its readers. Journalist Peter Wise noted in his piece 'Putting their Best Foot Forward', which led a series of articles in a special tournament supplement, *FTPortugal*, in the *Financial Times*, that:

Visiting football fans will discover a Portugal that is in many ways unrecognizable from the isolated, rural economy deliberately starved of investment by Salazar as part of a policy to prevent the rise of an educated, industrial workforce that could challenge the regime.

More than 1,000km of motorway, which will speed visitors between seven new and three renovated state of the art soccer stadiums built for Euro 2004, attest to the impact that the European Union structural funds have had on Portugal's physical transformation. (*FTPortugal, Financial Times*, 9 June)

Unsurprisingly, perhaps the most comprehensive series of articles on Portugal's economy and culture appeared in this pre-tournament issue of the *Financial Times*, with its small but highly influential readership.

Elsewhere, one of the most striking aspects of newspaper coverage of Euro 2004 in the tabloid press was the extent to which the location of the tournament seemed largely irrelevant. With the exception of concerns about the heat and its impact on the England players and the difficulties of facing the host nation in any football tournament (this arose when England played Portugal in the quarter-finals), Euro 2004 coverage largely revolved around all things connected with the England national team and its stars. When *Times* writer David Mattin reviewed some of the key travel books that visitors to Portugal might find useful he noted that, 'anyone hoping to see much of Portugal is sure to be disappointed by television coverage'. To this he could have added the tabloid press coverage (*The Times*, T2 supplement, 14 June).

This section of the British newspaper market was clearly speaking to what it viewed as its readership, a section of the population it would regard as having little interest in Portugal, except in possibly visiting the Algarve on a package holiday. It would be left largely to the broadsheets to bring any sense of the significance of the cultural location of the tournament to its readers. On the sports pages in the broadsheet press, aspects of Portugal were mobilized in a number of related match reports; for example, in his report of the host nation's disastrous opening match against Greece, Michael Walker in *The Guardian* (Sport section, 14 June: 10) in a piece titled 'Scolari Bears Brunt as Hosts Turn Their Anger Inwards', writes:

Portuguese, spoken quickly and often in dialect, is not the easiest language for the tourist to penetrate but few visitors here for Euro 2004 could misunderstand the front page of the sports daily *A Bola* yesterday morning. 'Não' it wailed.

He concluded his report by noting that:

After the seafaring theme of an enjoyably short opening ceremony, Portugal's Euro 2004 contribution is in danger of being remembered for its fish 'n' myths.

This nice blend of insight, situation and location brought to the match report, helps to move it beyond merely reflecting on a football match.

In the same vein, *Scotland on Sunday's* football writer Paul Forsyth would comment on the same match:

The pre-match routine, ever anxious to indulge in a dose of heavy-handed symbolism, also was inspired by history. . . . The theme here was maritime, given Portugal's links with the sea, and a big boat trundled out on to the pitch between people dressed as fish and a fake ocean. Mercifully, it lasted only a few minutes, although there are worse ways of spending a Saturday afternoon. (*Scotland on Sunday*, 13 June)

Elsewhere throughout the tournament, wider references to the cultural and historical influences shaping the Portuguese experience of the tournament could be found in the sports pages of the broadsheets. *The Times*, which devoted extensive space to the tournament through its daily football supplement, *The Game* (which for the Portugal vs England quarter-final was retitled *The Match*), offers a good example of such writing. In the lead up to this match, George Caulkin, under the heading 'Anxious Nation is Growing in Belief', referred to the roadside billboard posters being displayed outside the national team's training ground south of Lisbon.

Before Portugal's vital fixture against Spain last Sunday, the poster made reference to the Battle of Aljubarrota in 1385, when – according to legend – a bakerwoman had helped to ward off the advancing Spanish army with the aid of a spoon. After the Portugal side had lost to Greece and wriggled its way past Russia in Group A, it was a desperate appeal to pride, identity and defiance in the face of adversity. (*The Match*, *The Times*, 24 June)

There clearly exists a range of differing linguistic and cultural assumptions that underpin the perceived readerships of a newspaper such as *The Times* and a tabloid such as *The Sun*. The former now views itself as catering for a growing literate football fan readership, while the latter presents a much narrower view of the sport, one focused and increasingly driven by stars and aspects of celebrity culture (Boyle, forthcoming).

By way of contrast, we now turn our attention to the treatment of the visiting English by the Portuguese newspapers.

### An Englishman abroad: the Algarve and the real Portugal

It is worth noting that the discourses surrounding the English fan in the Portuguese press are not as monolithic or conservative as might have been expected considering the events that unfolded in Albufeira. This package-holiday resort was hit by late-night disturbances caused by the English fans. The range of interpretations that emerged about the English in Portugal while reinforcing an older 'hooligan' stereotype also saw attempts to place Englishness into a different, more non-threatening, amicable category. Even though Englishness was still associated with excess, mostly due to the large amounts of alcohol consumed, excess took on both positive and negative forms, depending on whether stories were coming out of Lisbon or Albufeira.

In some instances, older, well-established stereotypes remained untouched: English fans fitted the off-the-shelf ethnic picture of the red-lobster male, always excessively drunk and at times fairly amusing. However, the threatening image of the male was often juxtaposed with countless photographs of young women in Union Jack bikinis, with captions such as 'magic', 'good mood' and 'fair play'. A rather crude way of representing the growing feminization of the English travelling fan base.

#### *Albufeira: a country's image of the English abroad?*

It is significant that the largest incident involving English fans took place in the Algarve, and Albufeira. The Algarve is the locus through which most Portuguese citizens come into contact with a certain version of Englishness/Britishness.<sup>5</sup> Every year, hundreds of thousands of Portuguese holiday-makers negotiate their country's coast with a large group of tourists whose business has been attractive enough to change the shape of Algarve's cultural (and physical) landscape. (Such was the British influence that until recently it was possible to find restaurants that printed their menus exclusively in the English language.<sup>6</sup>)

The articulation of the troubles in Albufeira touch on these tensions between what constitutes a 'good' and a 'bad' English tourist. Albufeira is a mass tourism destination whose visible face is that of the 'loud partying crowd' that every night roams Rua da Oura (which the British have named 'the strip'), and the old fishing village of Albufeira. Other areas of the Algarve attract the wealthier golf enthusiasts and 'families in private villas'. The strength of the British pound, and the business model of British tour operators, results in Portuguese and British families of the same social/professional standing having very different purchasing power

in the Algarve, thus unequally sharing the spaces through which the locals experience Britishness.

So in the Algarve, as much as in Britain, there are oppositional definitions of the English which are underpinned by class. Albufeira, the visible side of British tourism, is quickly associated with the loud and drunken working-class Brits.

A *Bola* believed the violence in Albufeira was triggered by racial issues. Under the headline 'Xenophobic Motivations in Volcanic Streets', *A Bola* (17 June) tells the story of English fans provoking two black men in football strips. The newspaper paints an atmosphere of fear in Albufeira:

Shopkeepers act suspiciously, the joy has been suspended, the fear is spreading – this is the portrait of one of the most attractive areas of the Algarve. (*A Bola*, 17 June)

Interviewed in the newspaper *Público*, Cabrita Neto, head of the local tourism industry confederation, tried to reconcile the unwanted 'bad' tourist with the local economy's dependence on the British market:

Cabrita Neto appealed to the legal authorities not to be 'benevolent with the hooligans' who, in some ways, cannot be mistaken for the English community. 'These gentleman are no tourists, they are *rowdies*.' (*Público*, 17 June)

Portraits of Englishness/Britishness appear to be highly restricted by the geographic boundaries that separate the Algarve from the rest of the country. Further up the Atlantic coast, in the Alentejo region, *A Bola* carried the story of an Englishman who opened a bar in the once sleepy village of Vila Nova de Milfontes. When asked by the journalist why he had not located his business in the Algarve, he answers: 'The Algarve? Thanks . . . but no! There are too many English over there!' (*A Bola*, June 24).

### *Good vibes in Rossio Square*

In comparison to Albufeira, Lisbon appeared as a different geographic and cultural space for English fandom. *Público* interpreted Lisbon as a little cosmos of the English world – even though drinking was going on, the place had a non-threatening atmosphere. And as long as they supported the host nation, the English presented no threat:

GOOD VIBES IN ROSSIO SQUARE. It's two o'clock in the afternoon. Justin, a 31-year old, and Mark, 40 years of age, have been drinking beer

for more than seven consecutive hours. . . . By their side, a group of supporters for both teams hugged and sang together, half-tipsy – 'England, England' or 'Portugal, Portugal' whilst laughing a lot. . . . They're getting on so well that there were even some English guaranteeing that if their country is defeated, then they will support Portugal, and stay on for the party. (*Público*, 25 June)

This *joie de vivre* of the English was celebrated by some who saw their presence in the tournament as essential to the construction of football as a display of spectacle. Under the headline 'Thanks for Coming Over', columnist António Magalhães wrote in *Record*:

They might be a headache, they might turn a city upside down, leave a country in a state of alert. . . . but the truth is that without them the tournament would not have been as much fun. What would we make of Euro 2004 without the English? It would not have the same sense of party, the colourfulness, the passion and the craziness that was lived yesterday at the Stadium of Light. (*Record*, 14 June)

Expressing curiosity and a certain degree of puzzlement towards English drinking habits was a recurrent theme for journalists, at the same time providing endless material for television live feeds.

Under the headline 'Even the Pigeons Get Drunk', *Público* wrote:

The pavement of Rossio [square] was sticking to the soles of shoes, so extensive was the amount of beer spilt on the ground. 'Even the pigeons get drunk', said the municipal worker who . . . had the titanic task of [clearing up the piles of] cans, cups and empty bottles. To find a Englishman not drinking was like trying to find a needle in a haystack, and so I had to ask the question. 'Why is it that the English drink so much beer?' Joe Hewel, from Hampstead, had an answer ready: 'Because we can', he replied with a noisy laugh. (*Público*, 22 June)

More traditional stereotypes could still be found in reporting from the capital, but it seemed the Portuguese press was generally prepared to be benevolent with those English fans based in Lisbon. And this was not just because Lisbon had been 'trouble-free'. Quite the contrary, there were incidents in Lisbon during the tournament: it was rumoured that an English fan had thrown toxic gas into a city bus in Rossio Square, and several cars had been mobbed by fans who shook slow moving vehicles. In describing those incidents, *Público's* headline was particularly non-judgmental: '[community bus] Victim of Supporter's Enthusiasm' (*Público*, 12 June).

In general terms, news stories tended to draw a distinction between English fandom and England as a national category, by adding that the troubles initiated by a few individuals should not become representative

of the behaviour of the entire country. But there was some sense of relief once the English left the tournament, especially for the sports tabloids, which saw their departure as a spatial metaphor of regained sovereignty. *Record* headlined: 'Can You Believe It, Albufeira Has Turned Portuguese?' (*Record*, 25 June). In Lisbon, *A Bola* relished the sight of a green and red Rossio Square: 'Downtown Lisbon in Delirium, Rossio Has Been Re-Conquered: Madness!' (*A Bola*, 25 June).

By way of contrast, in the British press, Portugal as a holiday destination was also much in evidence during Euro 2004. Given the express aims of the Portuguese to use the tournament to raise awareness of Portugal the 'brand', this was hardly surprising. However, once again the divide that runs through the newspaper market in the UK between the tabloids and the broadsheet press shaped the coverage and the range of images of the country on view.

### **Destination Portugal: a holiday in the sun**

In the British tabloids, Portugal the holiday destination was equated with the Algarve and references to the country focused on this aspect of what Portugal had to offer – sun, sea, partying and British/English-style bars. As noted earlier, Albufeira in particular became synonymous in the British tabloids with this version of 'holiday Portugal'.

By way of contrast, a number of other broadsheet newspapers cleverly hung features on Portugal as a holiday destination around Euro 2004. Reinforcing the perceived importance of culture and class in defining their readerships, they mostly eschewed the traditional British working-class destination of the Algarve in favour of other parts of the country that offered a more traditional middle-class holiday experience 'off the tourist trail'. Of course, it is important to note that the word 'class' never gets mentioned, but has been replaced by a more consumerist lexicon that views particular holiday locales as 'upmarket' or 'distinctively ethnic' in their appeal.

*The Observer* (30 May), a Sunday broadsheet, carried a pull-out supplement in its *Escape* section called 'Euro 2004 City Guide: Kick Off in Portugal' (rather unfortunate phrasing perhaps, given that to 'kick off' is often a euphemism in the UK for trouble/violence starting). The paper offered a guide to any fan visiting one of the eight host cities, identifying the best places to stay, eat and see from Faro through Lisbon to Braga, while the Saturday issue of *The Times* (26 June), in its *Travel* supplement had a banner headline on its front page 'Beyond the Football: Exploring Northern Portugal is the Perfect Break for Active Families'. Inside

Martin Symington (who also wrote *The Observer* guide) raved about the physical and cultural delights he and his family enjoyed in the Minho region and on the Costa Verde of northern Portugal. Under the headline 'Extra Time Away from the Action', he noted how this part of the country was largely unaffected by tourism despite the efforts to raise its profile through staging Euro 2004 matches in the towns of Braga and Guimaraes.

Interestingly, in light of the discussion that follows, none of these articles made reference to Fado. However, other articles were less restrained. *The Guardian's* Euro 2004 guide offered a panel of experts to help you when visiting Portugal during the tournament. Under the headline 'Land of Painted Tiles and Fado in the Air', Tom Hall from the *Lonely Planet* guidebook asserted that:

Football is the all-consuming Portuguese passion but do not leave without a deeper appreciation for the culture of the country. *Azulejos* (painted tiles) are everywhere, as is the haunting sound of *fado* – melancholic music found all over the country but especially in Lisbon and Coimbra. (*The Guardian, Euro 2004: The Definitive Guide*, 12 June)

This identification of the Portuguese with Fado and a sense of melancholy being an integral part of the country's national identity and culture ran implicitly through much reporting in the UK press. It is worth looking at briefly in more detail.

### *Fado and the national character*

The origins of Fado are not consensual: some argue it evolved from medieval songs, others point to sailor chants developed during the Discoveries; there are even those who have traced it to Moorish melodies of lamentation. One of its key themes is the sadness of being distant from the homeland and the powerless surrender to an unknown destiny. Fado is easily fitted into historical moments shared by the nation: during the expansion and fall of the empire, through the victims of colonial wars, to the stories of emigrants. They all share the paradigm of (human) loss and unknown destiny (and destination). It has been instrumental to the essentialist discourse of Portuguese as melancholic and sad people. Travel writing perpetuates the myth of melancholy and celebrates the Fado trail in the city, ignoring the vibrant and growing music scene which fuses African, Brazilian and Portuguese sounds.

If a particular stereotype of Portuguese national character emerged from UK press coverage of Euro 2004, across both the tabloids and the broadsheet/compact press, it was related to Fado.

A piece by Nigel Coates under the 'Architecture' section of *The Independent on Sunday's* cultural magazine envisaged those supporters attending the France vs England match as wistfully forming part of a longer historical tradition as they merged with the physical and cultural geography of the city of Lisbon.

Those old enemies the French and the English will be careering through its narrow streets. Whether Goth or Gaul, they will want to impose their sense of entitlement on the amicable yet sometimes doleful Portuguese. My guess is that fans of the triumphant teams will congregate on Bairro Alto the western-most of the two hills that frame the city and home to the fashionable and hedonistic. But the losers will be drawn to the Alfama, the hill to the east famous for its dive bars where the languid voices of Fado singers mourn the loss of their fisherman lovers. (*The Independent on Sunday, ABC magazine*, 13 June)

It has obviously been a while since this journalist attended a major international football match if he imagines supporters will be so discerning, but the game becomes a convenient event through which to connect with wider myths that emphasize the historical and cultural credentials of Portugal.

### **Conclusion: some observations on Euro 2004 newspaper coverage and national identity**

Historically, the editorial style of the sports press in Portugal has tended to closely associate the prestige of the country with the team's successful performance: defeats represent a historical retreat to 19th-century decadence; victories signify a nation among the best in Europe (Coelho, 2001).

This research has certainly observed this trend during the Portuguese media coverage of the tournament: popular enthusiasm with the tournament turned into a public display of national flag-waving that acted as a symbolic representation of nationalism. As Portugal was hosting Euro 2004, the tournament opened up the metaphor of national team performance (and success) as a signifier of a wider economic and political national rejuvenation. For a large section of the Portuguese media, Euro 2004 became a story about the ability to successfully look the rest of Europe in the eye as full equals. It became a story about

deadlines, budgets, economic recovery, tourism, better infrastructures and fool-proof security.

So when UEFA claimed Euro 2004 as the best in the history of the tournament, Portugal's political elite felt justified and vindicated. *Diário de Notícias's* editorial noted:

For now, the country has had a great victory, as the host of the football championship of the Old Continent. Now that we are only two matches away from the final of Euro 2004 it can be said, without any great margin of error, that Portugal has elevated its name and proved its ability to build infrastructures that support the event, as well as the organization of the transportation systems and the security of the tournament. The compliments from abroad could not be more enthusiastic. After all, we are as capable if not more than others, it's just that we have a terrible habit of self-flagellation. (*Diário de Notícias*, 1 July)

Before the rest of Europe, Portugal had passed its test with flying colours. In contrast to the failure at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, Euro 2004 seemingly allowed the discourse of decadence and 'self-flagellation' to be put to rest. The country could reimagine its century-old perennial identity as part of a wider contemporary identity with European political and economic influence.

Yet sport remains an inherently unstable cultural form through which to express a national identity. By this we mean that success in sport is invariably the preserve of a small group of teams or individuals; as most football fans will tell you, failure in sport is more commonly experienced than the thrill of winning. Any country that places an unrealistic weight of expectation on sport to deliver wider national and cultural success can almost be guaranteed disappointment. However, as Alabarces et al. (2001: 549) have argued: 'sports events can fuel, however transiently, a sense of harmony and unity, creating, albeit fleetingly, a homogenizing effect', something clearly evident in Portugal as the team reached the final of the tournament.

What, however, clearly emerges from this research is the ability of national media to inflect and represent international media events through national frames of reference. Thus the international, even global sport of football becomes an important ideological vehicle for the retelling of national narratives about contemporary societies, however truthful or accurate these discourses may in fact be, or the extent to which they are carried by other national media.

Thus for all Portugal's attempts to reposition their cultural location in the minds of the rest of Europe, it would be other national concerns

which preoccupied the bulk of the British media during the tournament.

### *England, sport and media markets*

The discourses that circulate around the English national team before every major tournament inevitably focus on the team's ability to win the tournament. As Alabarces et al. (2001: 563) have argued:

Insularity of national football histories has bred foundation myths of national superiority, with little substance in any objective history of actual achievement. Such myths pervade both everyday life and media discourse. Media discourses feed off these myths in narratives of continuity and the potential restoration and the remaking of national superiority.

This is clearly applicable to England and coverage of the team during Euro 2004, a tournament the majority of the press felt they could win (despite the fact that they haven't won a major tournament for almost 40 years). In addition, the 'invisibility' of Portugal in the tabloid press, other than as a sun-drenched holiday destination or a rather backward economy, served implicitly only to reinforce the apparent modern and advanced nature of British (for many they actually mean English) society.

Previous research (Blain et al., 1993) has indicated that the broader ideological frame of reference that both the British tabloid and broadsheet press operated within looked remarkably similar, specifically with regard to attitudes to Europe and all things foreign. However, we would argue that this research indicates that within the sports pages, at least, a substantial gulf has developed between sports coverage in the tabloids and broadsheets. There has been a dramatic expansion in the space devoted to sports journalism in the broadsheet press in the UK over the last decade or so and the range and depth of sports journalism now available across the press is both extensive and distinctive. The version of Portugal that emerged from print coverage of the tournament depended largely on which section of the press market you drew your coverage from. We would suggest that there has not been a convergence in sports news values in the press, as is sometimes argued to be the case in other areas of journalism. Rather the distance between sports coverage in the tabloid and broadsheet/compacts end of the marketplace has never appeared so pronounced.

It is also necessary to highlight the British tabloid press's lack of negative stereotypes of Portugal and the Portuguese. As we have revealed already, such was their focus on the matches, the stars and the fans during the tournament that very rarely was the frame of reference in the tabloids

widened to include the physical and cultural backdrop to the tournament. For many newspaper readers, one of the dominant images of Portugal is that of a friendly, but backward, unsophisticated and ultimately unimportant country, offering no economic, cultural or political threat to Britain. As a result, the wrath of the tabloids was reserved for more traditional enemies, such as mocking the early exit of the Germans, and the creation of some new foes, such as the Swiss, and the referee Uris Mehir in particular.

Rather than suggest a new age of enlightenment among sections of the British press towards its European neighbours then – and even a cursory glance at the non-sports pages during the European elections would actually indicate a hardening of attitudes towards all things European – the lack of Portugal offering a cultural, political or economic threat to Britain is a more likely explanation of the benign nature of the images in the popular press.

Should, however, the newly appointed President of the European Union – the former prime minister of Portugal, Jose Manuel Durão Barroso – decide to upset British Eurosceptic opinion (there is a degree of inevitability about this, it must be said) then expect sections of the UK press to denigrate Portugal's right to have a national leading Europe's elite. More polite versions of the discourses being articulated in the TalkSPORT advert may find themselves being aired in the mainstream political arena.

Finally, Euro 2004 has also confirmed the overwhelming popularity of sports in setting the Portuguese news media agenda, often to the detriment of core political reporting. As the tournament was approaching its end, it became known that Prime Minister Durão Barroso was about to resign in order to take the EU presidency post, raising doubts on whether his chosen successor for the executive seat (Pedro Santana Lopes) enjoyed enough political support for the job. While the critical public debate on the matter ensued in the limited sphere of a reduced number of quality papers, television stations continued to dominate their news bulletins with images of a country celebrating in union.

Expressing puzzlement at this divorce between political debate and the public sphere, columnist Miguel Sousa Tavares reflected in the daily *Público*:

Riding the wave of patriotic emotion was [Portugal's] President Sampaio, with tears in his eyes. He had presented medals of national honour and suggested that the national team's players and technicians became symbols of 'modern patriotism'. [These are the people] who were playing with all the odds in their favour only to achieve the feat of winning three matches

by an inch, drawing one match and losing two others. And many of those who had let themselves be contaminated by the patriotic wave, woke up a few days later to the real nightmare of the political arrangement cooked up by Barroso and Santana, which Sampaio gave his consent to. Portugal has returned thus, in one single strike, to its sad reality. (*Público*, 16 July)

If many of those who toppled Portugal's right-wing dictatorship in 1974 saw football as one of the propaganda tools of the old regime, as Peter Wise of the *Financial Times* noted at the start of this article, where were they now? As strange as it sounds, they appeared to be perpetuating the very same thing they once condemned.

International sport and its mediated coverage remains a compelling route into examining wider political and cultural impulses that shape contemporary societies. The comparative dimension of this research has indicated the continued importance of national media in retelling international stories. Thus, while sporting success can offer some shifts in wider international perceptions, these are often transient, and will inevitably be shaped by the larger economic and political battles being waged between countries.

## Notes

We thank Maria de Lurdes Monteiro and João Pinho for sourcing newspapers in Portugal and Noelle Boyle for her work on the UK press.

1. The newspapers were analysed over a period from 30 May to 7 July 2004. In the UK, they included the broadsheets/compacts *Financial Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, the Scottish-based *Scotsman* and *The Herald*; the middle-market tabloid *Daily Mail* and the red top tabloids, *The Sun*, *Daily Mirror* and the Scottish-based *Daily Record*. The Sunday newspapers examined were *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *Scotland on Sunday*, *The Observer* and the *Sunday Herald*. From the Sunday tabloid market, papers examined were *Sunday Mail*, *The News of the World* and *Sunday Mirror*. Portuguese daily newspapers used in the analysis were the qualities *Diário de Notícias* and *Público*, the populist tabloid *Correio da Manhã* and sports newspapers *Record* and *A Bola*. The sample included the Sunday editions of the aforementioned newspapers. Our research was also informed by data about economic aspects of the tournament from *Jornal de Negócios* (and its online edition *negócios.pt*) and *Diário Económico*.
2. During Lisbon's Expo '98, Portuguese elites exposed the dichotomies of past/future issues in their active contestation of meaning for the event. While some condemned the symbolism of Expo '98 as closely associated to the past Discoveries (and therefore distant from the future imagination of the nation as a contemporary brand); others criticized the organization for being too shy

- to take the theme to a full celebration of the country's history (a letter signed by 98 intellectuals complained at the lack of a pavilion/exhibition solely dedicated to the Portuguese Discoveries); see Cahen (1998).
3. At the time of writing, the Portuguese financial press comprised four well-established newspapers: two weekly titles (*Semanário Económico* and *Vida Económica*) and two daily titles (*Jornal de Negócios* and *Diário Económico*). *Diário Económico* has a permanent section on football finances and business – something largely absent in the sports coverage in the British press, with Ashling O'Connor's Monday column in *The Times* supplement *The Game* a rare exception – and *Jornal de Negócios* had a section on Euro 2004 where it covered news on the economic implications of the tournament.
  4. In 2003, Portugal was the EU's worst performing economy as the government struggled to close a budget gap that breached its euro currency zone limits in 2001.
  5. The complex nationalities of the British Isles are often difficult for the Portuguese press to grasp. Most people refer to the UK as England, and to the British as English.
  6. The Portuguese government banned this practice after years of lobbying by Portuguese holiday-makers in the region.

## References

- Alabarces, P., A. Tomlinson and C. Young (2001) 'Argentina versus England at the France '98 World Cup: Narratives of Nation and Mythologizing the Popular', *Media, Culture and Society* 23(5): 547–66.
- Blain, N., R. Boyle and H. O'Donnell (1993) *Sport and National Identity in the European Media*. Leicester: Leicester University Press.
- Boyle, R. (forthcoming) *Sports Journalism: Context and Issues*. London: Sage.
- Boyle, R. and R. Haynes (2000) *Power Play: Sport, the Media and Popular Culture*. London: Pearson.
- Bromley, M. (1998) 'The "Tabloidizing" of Britain: "Quality" Newspapers in the 1990s', pp. 25–38 in H. Stephenson and M. Bromley (eds) *Sex, Lies and Democracy: The Press and the Public*. London: Longman.
- Cahen, M. (1998) 'L'Expo '98, le nationalisme et nous', *Lusotopie*: 11–19.
- Coelho, J.N. (2001) *Portugal, a equipa de todos nós*, Porto: edições afrontamento.
- Crolley, L. and D. Hand (2002) *Football, Europe and the Press*. London: Frank Cass.
- Franklin, B. (1997) *Newszak and News Media*. London: Arnold.
- Garland, J. and M. Rowe (1999) 'War Minus the Shooting? Jingoism, the English Press, and Euro 96', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 23(1): 80–95.
- O'Donnell, H. (1994) 'Mapping the Mythical: A Geopolitics of National Sporting Stereotypes', *Discourse and Society* 5(3): 345–80.

- Puijk, R. (ed.) (1996) *Global Spotlights on Lillehammer: How the World Viewed Norway during the 1994 Winter Olympics*. Luton: Luton University Press.
- Sparks, C. (2000) 'Introduction: The Panic over Tabloid News', pp. 1–40 in C. Sparks and J. Tulloch (eds) *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates over Media Standards*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.