

It's Coming Hoam

Language, translation and identity in English and German football club



Hoam is the bairisch (Bavarian) word for 'home' (the standard German word being *heim*). FC Bayern Munich used the term to tweak the refrain from the famous English football song *Three Lions* to celebrate winning the 2012/13 Champions League at Wembley.

Beginnings



- Lifelong interest in sport – incl. supporting my local football team (Reading FC)
- Witnessing the changes globalisation has caused in football – local <-> global tensions
- This includes linguistic changes: e.g. statistical focus and vocabulary imported from US sports (e.g. 'turnover')
- Thinking about the idea of football as a universal language through the lens of translation
- Settled on focus of globalisation, language and place for my research

Football place and globalisation example



Reading FC's long-time home ground – **Elm Park** (1896-1998)

- concrete terraces, wooden stands
- for most of its history mixture of standing and seating
- surrounded by housing, close to the town centre



Reading FC's modern home – currently named the **Select Car Leasing Arena**

- all seater, fully covered, includes hotel and conference centre
- next to a motorway junction, sewage works and car dealership
- outskirts of town

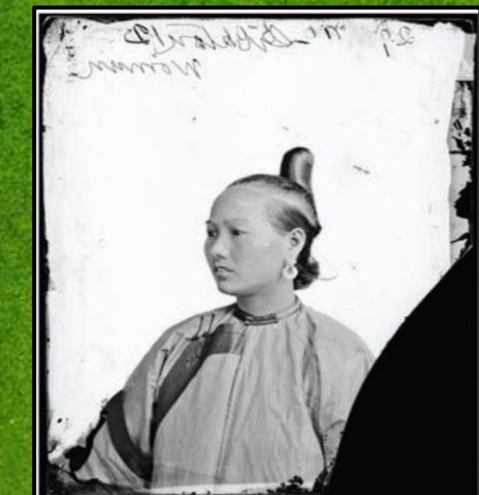
Football globalisation and language example



When football tactics changed from three to four defenders in the late 1950s, English teams pulled back the 6, leaving the 4 in midfield – with the term 'a (number) 4' becoming a metonym for a defensive midfielder. Elsewhere, it was '6' who took on this role. More recently, as the Premier League has attracted professionals from across the globe to these shores, so has the more globalised use of the '6' come to replace the more localised English use of '4'.

Inspiration for heritage focus – 'One hoto, two stories' (Liao)

Liao explains how translation produces divergent narratives in an exhibition of Victorian photographer John Thomson's images taken in China. The Chinese texts present Thomson as a 'friendly foreigner', whereas the English gave the impression of a 'cold, imperialist gaze'.



- **Germany** and **England** useful for comparison because of different ownership models
- England has a **private ownership** model, where anyone can control 100% of the club
- In Germany, sports clubs are seen as **public organisations**, incl. the so-called **50+1** law
- Voting power has to be controlled 50% plus one vote by the members

Research, fieldwork and analysis

Rationale

- Focus on **club identity** connected to **place**
- Museum focus – potential for translation creating different narratives
- Knowledge gap - relatively little translation and sport literature
- scope for exploratory, interdisciplinary study

RQs

What linguistic and cultural practices are used in football museums and stadia to communicate identity?
 How are such practices deployed to display global and local identities?
 How do presentations of identity differ from one football locale to the next?

Key concepts

Cultural studies

- identity – performance, place, economics
- globalisation – cultural flows, global culture, **glocalisation**

Heritage studies

- tension – **commerce and authenticity**
- civic links - 'Bilbao effect' (Plaza) - lieux de mémoire (Nora)
- corporate museums

Linguistics and translation

- social power of institutional narratives – CDA –
- Global English - central and peripheral languages
- Football English as LSP (language for specialised purposes)
- **translation** socially situated (Tymoczko, House) - re-prioritisation in museums (Neather)



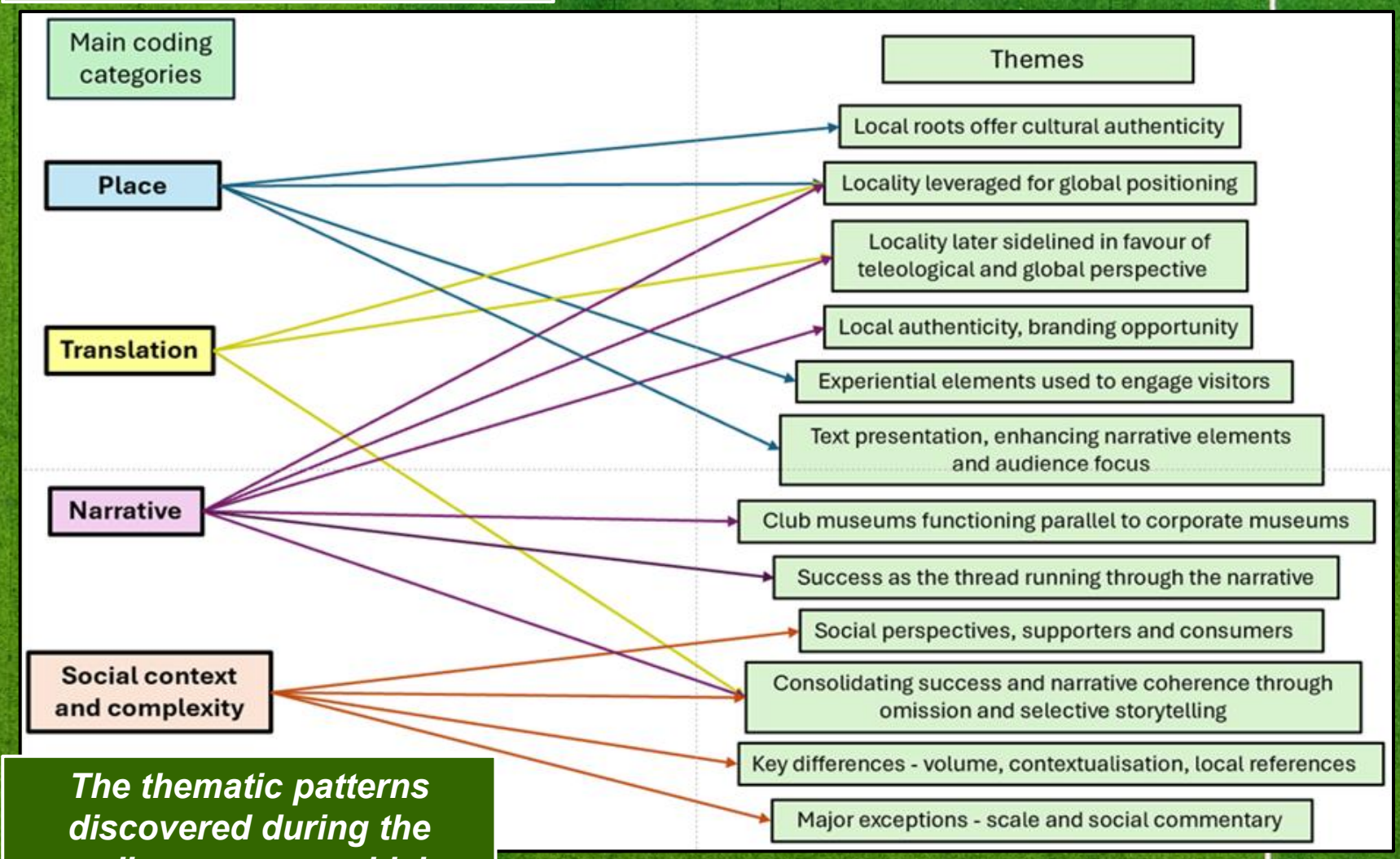
Museums can form important links between *urban identities and cultural expression*. One such example is the *Linzi Football Museum in Zibo, China*, which celebrates the region as the birthplace of *cuju* - the first recorded sport involving kicking a ball

Fieldwork and analysis

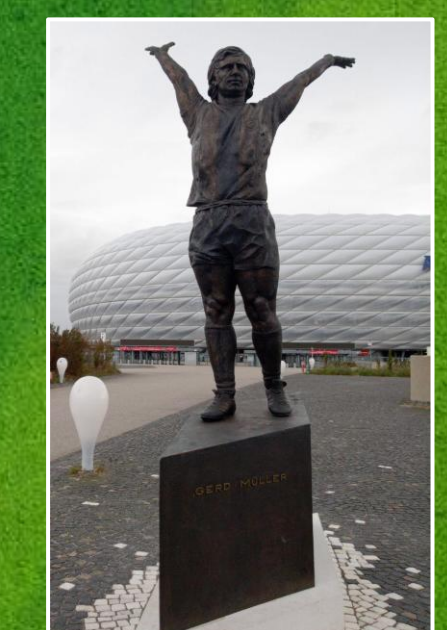


Myself and the Dutch great Dennis Bergkamp at Arsenal FC's stadium in Islington, London

- Conducted pilot study (Arsenal museum) – saw evidence of local <-> global tension in narratives
- Collected texts from six museums - Arsenal, Chelsea, Bayern Munich, Hamburg, St Pauli, Werder Bremen
- 150k words – MAXQDA software for coding due to scale
- coding process – three inductive cycles increasingly focused on emerging patterns related to identity
- 10k text segments coded - four main theoretical categories: place, narrative, social context, translation -> discussion themes derived from these categories



The thematic patterns discovered during the coding process, which provided the basis for the thesis' discussion chapter



Gerd Müller, Bayern's all-time leading goalscorer, greets on the walk up from the metro station to the Allianz Arena.



St Pauli, named after their district of Hamburg, are a famously counter-culture and explicitly left-wing club. They also play in the shadow of a Nazi bunker.

Thematic discoveries and conclusions

Discussion themes

Glocal tensions, global image - narrative teleological shift from local authenticity to global identity
'FC Bayern is a world-class club. Only Real Madrid, Barcelona, Milan and Manchester United can keep up.'

Narrative threads, mythical ends - broad appeal through intertextual reinforcement of popularity and success

- interwoven with identity aspects for visitors to relate to - humanising the corporation
- omission / selective storytelling consolidates narrative coherence (e.g. *no translation in English museums / Chelsea do not address Roman Abramovich*)



Similarities

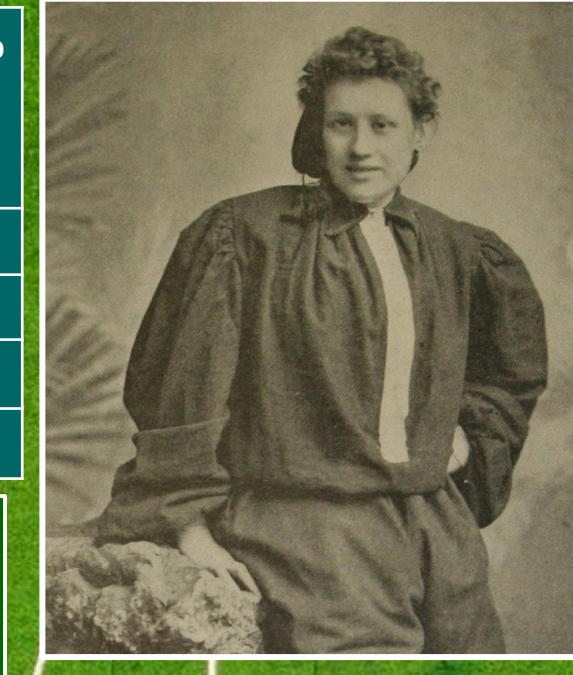
- Embed club in global a narrative - combining local roots with global ambitions
- consensus on content - successes, stadia, famous players, unique aspects

Differences

- interweave more aspects of local identity
- detailed explanations, more technical lexis
- supporter culture, and more social context
- iconic moments as part of myth building
- streamlined storytelling - narrative cohesion
- fans seen more as passive consumers

Social context example of difference - women's football - volume, topics

Club	Words in museum	Words on women's football	Overall % women's football
Arsenal	10,389	311	3.0%
Chelsea	9,948	103	1.0%
Munich	79,413	10,490	13.2%
Bremen	7,051	1,294	18.4%



Surreal experience: twice reading about pioneer Nettie Honeyball and her team the British Ladies Football Club in English, in Germany – having not encountered her in her native London's museums

Women's football issues the German museums covered and English didn't:

- early English beginnings and popularity during WWI
- banning of women's football in both countries,
- discrimination and obstacles to professionalism

Conclusions and recommendations

- **unified, selective teleological narratives** - positivity and globality
- progress from **authentically local beginnings** -> a present of **global success and popularity**
- comparable to **corporate museums** – include commercial success, sponsors
- 'Museum' - **voice of authority** – lends later, hagiographic depiction/positive traits extra intensity

The following quote from FC Bayern museum illustrates how commercial consumption is interwoven into narratives of identity: ***The fans love it, because a Bayern toaster in the of their loving relationship with kitchen is more than a mere toaster. It is a symbol "their" club. It is, if you will, a profession of faith.***

- **increase scope** – museums, media, design,
- **look at processes** – ethnographic, visitor reception
- consideration of **'museum'** - focus on **information and education**
- encourage integration of **polyphony and social context**
- possible foundation for **heritage module**

What do you think? England to win the World Cup?



Felix Clutson – felix.clutson@gmail.com