Unpicking match-fixing; a two-country analysis

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Match-fixing, '*the activity that attempts to deliberately distort the result of a sporting* contest', has received increasing attention over time (Gorse & Chadwick, 2010, p.40). Nowadays, although it is extremely difficult to measure the extent of match-fixing, it seems that football is the primary context of fixed matches, although other sports such as cricket, basketball, tennis, sumo, horse-racing, and snooker seem to have fallen victims of the practice (see Manoli & Antonopoulos, 2015). While the motivation for match-fixing can vary from purely economic benefits, which can be direct or indirect, to sport benefits depending on the circumstances (Breuer & Kaiser, 2016), the way in which we have responded to match-fixing varies drastically among different leagues, sports and countries (Haberfeld & Sheehan, 2013). Since the examination of match-fixing cases and corresponding responses is still in its infancy (Lee, 2017), we have yet to capture the full extent of the phenomenon and its contextual parameters, despite the national and international sport governing bodies' warnings about the seriousness of its repercussions on the future of sports (FIFA, 2015; IOC, 2016).

The aim of this study is to conduct a cross-case analysis of two prominent match-fixing cases in an attempt to shed light on this under-researched topic, while unpicking the details, similarities and differences between them. The two match-fixing scandals selected as the instrumental case studies for this research will allow us to identify any patterns in the internal and external actors and processes, that would help highlight the social organisation of match-fixing. In other words, the two cases are used as a platform in order for insights to be gained on the issue, while, through analytic generalisation (Yin, 2009), allowing for the cases to contribute to theory testing and development. The instrumental case studies of this research are the 2011 match-fixing scandals in Greek and Turkish football, which have attracted considerable attention by the Press and international governing bodies. Both cases have been examined in court in their respective countries and the Court of Arbitration for Sport, producing detailed legal case files about numerous matches played in the first two divisions of both countries. A content analysis of these case files took place in this study in order for the actors involved and processes followed to be identified and highlighted. Through this, an extended list of previously undocumented individuals and a perplex web of relations were presented, suggesting that our current understanding of match-fixing and manipulation practices captures only a fragment of the people and processes involved.

What emerges from this study is that the entities involved in the business of match-fixing are networks i.e., fluid and dynamic social systems that consist of patterns of relationships among people/actors (Wasserman and Faust 1994). Football match-fixing does not require a great degree of sophistication, with participants on these networks often acting on improvisation, while guided by two main motives; intimidation or reward. Individuals or small groups are thus forming temporary collaborations in order for their shared objective, short term or long term profit, to materialise. As a result, a non-standardised and uncoordinated criminal activity is carried out on the basis of opportunity rather than authority, which would suggest that match-fixing can in fact not be considered an 'organised crime' activity (von Lampe 2003). While the emphasis of the legal authorities and international governing bodies has been placed on branding and prosecuting match-fixing as 'organised crime', the important role of the indigenous conditions of professional sports, such as its 'upperworld' and close relationship with politics, is in fact ignored.

Keywords: corruption in sport, football corruption, match-fixing scandal, Greek football, Turkish football.