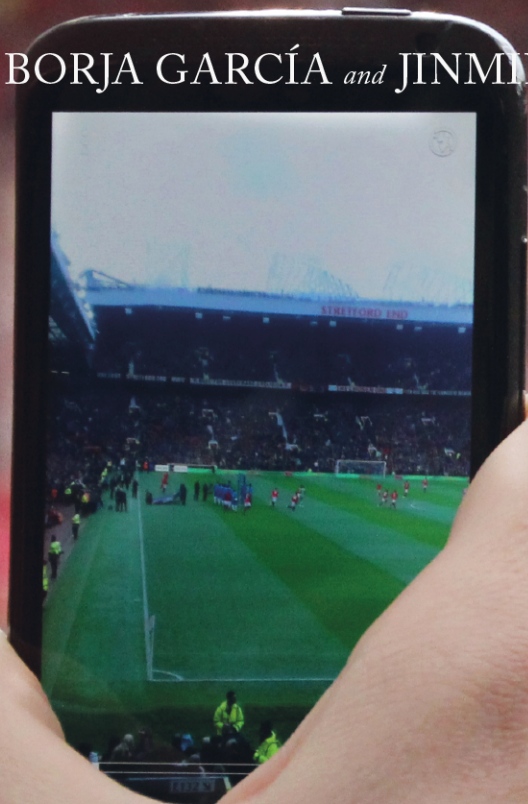


FOOTBALL AND SUPPORTER ACTIVISM IN EUROPE

WHOSE GAME IS IT?

Edited by BORJA GARCÍA *and* JINMING ZHENG



FOOTBALL RESEARCH IN
AN ENLARGED EUROPE

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Football and Supporter Activism in Europe

Whose Game Is It?

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To (the late) Dave Allen
Without whose generous and enthusiastic support
none of this would have ever been possible.
Come on you Reds!
Borja García

Preface

This collective book is the first comprehensive attempt to bring together research on football supporters' activism and fan culture in Europe. The increasing political importance of the supporter movement in the governance of the game has led to justified academic attention to this area. However, the wide diversity of fan cultures across the continent, which mirrors the wide natural diversity of Europe, will always make such a task very difficult. The European Commission decision to fund the FREE (Football Research in an Enlarged Europe) Project between 2012 and 2015 enabled academics and practitioners to undertake what is, to date, the widest and most comprehensive research effort on football supporters in Europe to date.

This book would have never been possible without the enthusiastic commitment of the authors themselves. It is rare to find a group of authors that always deliver on time following the prompts of the editors. Believe it or not, this has been the case. Each one of the authors embraced the project of this book as theirs, delivering chapters of outstanding quality under tight deadlines. This has made our lives as editors much easier. Finally, an enormous word of thanks has to go to the postgraduate and undergraduate students of Loughborough University's School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, whose work as volunteers facilitated enormously the organisation of the conference that originated this book.

This collective book brings together papers presented in the FREE Project conference ‘Whose Game Is It? Supporters and Football’, hosted by Loughborough University in October 2014. That conference, the FREE Project itself and the publication of this book have been funded by the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) of the European Commission (Grant agreement: 290805), for which we are extremely grateful.

Borja García
Jinming Zheng

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1

Introduction

Borja García and Jinming Zheng

If God had wanted us to play football in the clouds, he would have put grass up there (Brian Clough)

There is a growing concern that the increasing commercialisation of association football in Europe is having harmful effects on the game and that this might be negatively impacting supporters (see e.g. Conn 1997; Giulianotti 2005; Hamil 1999; Hudsonm 2001). The majority of academic interest in football fans to date has given attention to the impact of football's structural and cultural changes on the behaviour of the

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supporter. However, there has been only a small (albeit growing) focus on this relationship in reverse: the impact the supporter might have on the structures of football. This is striking given the growing number of supporters that are organising themselves in democratic groups around Europe to have a say in the governance of the game. This lack of empirical evidence into supporter involvement in football governance is significant in suggesting a far from complete understanding of supporter behaviours and experiences, as the literature has so far conceptualised the modern football supporter as little more than a ‘consumer’ of football, which is unfortunate.

Despite the global popularity of football, concerns over the governance of the game have attracted the attention of many policy-makers and politicians. While this is a well-developed agenda in Britain, growing attention can also be seen around Europe and the rest of the world. In the current debates in Europe, some of the governance pitfalls of football are interestingly associated with a lack of engagement with supporters. In very broad terms, it is argued that opening the game up to the supporters will not only connect football to the community but also increase transparency and accountability. Thus, the All Party Parliamentary Football Group’s (2009: 14) enquiry into football governance stressed that ‘the one group that are most under-represented in the sport are the people who should have the most say: the fans’. The UK Parliament’s Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee announced its follow-up enquiry into football governance in 2010 to ‘establish the seriousness of the problems facing the game, and to examine possible options to address them – including *greater supporter involvement* – that, crucially, did not impinge on English football’s undoubted strengths’ (Department of Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS] 2011: 5, emphasis added).

Thus, there is a clear policy interest in the role of supporters in the governance of football. It has the potential, for some, to improve the management of the game. It is also clear that a number of football fans have been very active in organising themselves around supporter organisations to fight their corner and have a voice in football. However, this is a relatively recent phenomenon. Moreover, the incredible diversity of European football and its fan culture is a challenge for any research effort in this area. This collective book is an attempt to go beyond the traditional focus on single case studies or single countries when studying football supporters.

By bringing together a group of 12 chapters with research from nine different countries (England, Germany, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Turkey, Czech Republic, Poland and Portugal), this collective volume provides width and depth to the ongoing research on supporter activism. As editors of the volume, we are fully aware that generalisations in this area are extremely complicated. On the other hand, presenting evidence from diverse contexts allowed us to identify some common dynamics that we analyse in the conclusion. In the selection of the chapters we, as editors, were constrained by the responses we received to an open call for contributions to the FREE (Football Research in an Enlarged Europe) Project conference organised in Loughborough. We were also constrained by the diverse nature of research in supporters' activism, a typical feature of young academic disciplines. The result, however, is a very acceptable geographical spread of cases, from east to west and south to north. Also, there is a variety of large and small leagues across the continent. Thus, this volume presents a very rich empirical account of supporter activism dynamics in Europe; it needs to be understood as a book that aims to work deductively. The chapters on this volume analyse a diversity of elements within the activist movement of supporters from an interdisciplinary perspective. Our aim is to lay the ground with an initial broad enquiry to discuss a number of conceptual reflections to structure a new research agenda.

The book is divided into two big parts. The first part of the book deals with chapters focusing on the so-called 'Big Five' leagues. That is to say, the most commercialised footballing countries in Europe. The second part deals with chapters focusing on countries outside the 'Big Five'. In a way, this may be seen (without any negative connotations) as an analysis between the centre and the periphery of European football.

All our contributions have something in common. They demonstrate that, if properly structured, fans can be a force for the good in football. They tend to have the future of their clubs at heart. The chapters in this collective volume point towards the need to write a more positive discourse about fan engagement beyond past understandings of hooliganism or conflict. This, however, will not be easy. The chapters in the book also suggest a clear number of barriers that are hindering the development of supporter activism in Europe.

As pointed out above, the structure of the book is simple. In the first part, a total of six chapters analyse supporter activism in four of the 'Big Five' leagues. Chapters 2 and 3 look at supporter experiences in England. The former focuses on the general transformation of football in England and the supporters' movement against modern elements of football, which includes the commercialisation and commodification of the game. The latter presents the experiences of a transgender supporter in football watching and club supporting through an in-depth case study of one Norwich City fan. It provides an alternative angle to understand fan behaviour. Chapters 4 and 5 concern supporter engagement in Italy, where supporter involvement is a very recent phenomenon. Chapter 4 highlights the significance of national cooperation in regulating supporter behaviour through the introduction and discussion of the experience of Italian ultras. Chapter 5 presents a case study of low league club Sambenedettese, which reveals some evidence of positive supporter engagement in clubs of lower leagues in Italy, but supporters' involvement is very limited and fans do not have decision making power or shared ownership. Chapters 6 and 7 provide detailed analysis of the more successful and democratic models of supporter engagement through the study of fan representation models in Germany and governance in the Spanish club C.A. Osasuna. These two chapters provide an interesting contrast to the English and Italian models.

In the second part of the book, six chapters analyse the role of supporters in some smaller footballing nations, providing a good north/south and east/west geographical representation. Chapters 8 and 9 look at supporter engagement and fan behaviour in Croatia. The former focuses on the country's club ownership model and the possibility to export it to other South-East European nations. The latter studies Croatian hooligans' rivalry as well as their unified actions against corruption. Chapter 10 is to do with sports broadcasting by introducing a relatively new model of club-owned TV through the analysis of Benfica TV in Portugal. This is followed by Chapter 11 which discusses a successful example of supporter engagement, decision-making power, and ownership in the Czech Republic through the case study of Bohemians Prague 1905 Supporters' Trust. Chapter 12 explores the significance of supporters'

involvement in the governance of football in Poland through the analysis of several clubs. The final chapter reviews the development of football and supporter engagement in Turkey. More importantly, it tries to identify the reasons leading to the limited effectiveness of government policy on hooliganism and supporter violence.

Finally, in the conclusion, the editors consider the lessons that can be learnt from this collection of contributions, pointing to the future avenues for research in this interesting area of the social sciences.

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Part 1

**Football Governance and Supporter
Activism in the 'Big Five' European
Leagues**

2

The Great Transformation of the English Game: Karl Polanyi and the Double Movement 'Against Modern Football'

David M. Webber

In February 2015, Sky and BT Sport brokered a new television deal with the Premier League worth over £5 billion to televise live matches from England's top division between 2016 and 2019. Representing a staggering 70 per cent increase on the 2013–2016 agreement, this deal would underline the exceptional appeal of top-flight English football, not simply at home but increasingly across the world. The Premier League now stands as one of Britain's wealthiest industries, and the only one with a truly global reach. From Manchester to Mumbai and from Liverpool to Los Angeles, the tentacles of the self-proclaimed 'greatest league in the world' are unparalleled and almost universal.

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Still referred to in England as ‘the people’s game’ (Walvin 2000), football has long retained a cherished and unique place in the building of modern Britain (Goldblatt 2014). Yet for all its cultural appeal, until its biggest clubs broke away to form the Premier League a generation ago, that the sport could even begin to attract the wealth it now commands would have been unthinkable. In the wake of the fire at Bradford City’s Valley Parade Ground, where 56 fans lost their lives, *The Sunday Times* described English football as a ‘a slum sport played in slum stadiums increasingly watched by slum people’ (*The Sunday Times* 1985). If they did not agree already, many government ministers and social commentators had these views reinforced less than a fortnight later, when, prior to the 1985 European Cup final, 39 Juventus fans died at the dilapidated Heysel Stadium in Brussels following fighting with Liverpool supporters.

Thirty years after the tragic events of Valley Parade and Heysel, however, football has undergone an almost Damascene conversion. In the midst of English football’s redemption, however, a tension has emerged at the heart of ‘the people’s game’. Increasing numbers of fans are voicing their dissent at what they see as a sport now far removed from the supporters who make the game what it is. Such discontent is not limited just to England. Across much of what might be described as football’s traditional hinterland in Western Europe, fans in Spain and Italy have unfurled banners protesting against issues ranging from above-inflation ticket increases and the game’s weak governance to continued criminalisation of certain fan groups. Although frequently contradictory and far from coherent, the movement ‘Against Modern Football’ (hereafter, AMF) is comprised of male and female fans with an array of interests, often transcending the club loyalties that tend to split supporters. The purpose of this chapter is to offer an assessment of this movement and to restate its importance as a means of reclaiming the game and reasserting its *cultural*, rather than simply economic value.

An academic understanding of ‘modern football’ has received little by way of scholarly attention. Dino Numerato (2015) has made an important contribution to the debate with an analysis of who, in terms of the Italian game, is against modern football. The purpose of this chapter, however, is to explore the cultural political economy of

modern football in England. To do this, it deploys the analysis of the economic historian, Karl Polanyi, whose seminal work, *The Great Transformation* (1944/2001), explores the origins of the market society. The distinctiveness and indeed value of Polanyi's work is that it bridges the gap that so often exists in more orthodox accounts of political economy between ethics and economics, and morals and markets. The emphasis that Polanyi places upon the cultural and social components of the economic system has appealed to those increasingly concerned at the scale and speed of economic dislocation, social chaos and political instability that neoliberalism has created (Dale 2010: 4). For Polanyi, market economies are not separate from society. They are instead inherently linked, or 'embedded' and any transformation, will have – and indeed, insofar as the English game is concerned, *has had* – clear social and cultural effects. I argue in this chapter that it is these effects that form the basis of the concerns articulated by those who would self-identify as being 'against modern football'. It is therefore possible to extend the critique that Polanyi himself offers of the market society and apply this to English football's own 'great transformation' and the cultural tensions created by its embrace of market capitalism.

Central to the analytical claims made in this chapter is the 'double movement' that Polanyi deploys in *The Great Transformation* as a heuristic device to understand the ways in which market-controlled economies are formed and then, crucially, resisted by society (Polanyi 1944/2001: 79–80). As well as resonating with those standing 'against modern football', Polanyi's work also provides an intellectual framework that might underpin the reclaiming of the game from the economic interests that now dominate the sport. This chapter will therefore use Polanyi's 'double movement' to, in the first instance, narrate English football's 'great transformation' before moving on to consider the prospects of establishing an altogether more democratic and sustainable model of football in England. I begin then by taking as my point of departure, the political economy of Thatcherism. This, I argue, shaped both the discourse of crisis that was projected onto English football during the 1980s and then the shift towards a more commercially minded sport in keeping with the sensibilities of neoliberal Britain at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Thatcherism, Hillsborough and the First Stage of English Football's 'Double Movement'

To understand the emergence of 'modern football' and concomitantly, the movement against it, it is necessary to provide an overview of the historically specific changes that English football has experienced over the past 30 years. The purpose of this opening section is to consider what Polanyi might have described as the first stage of football's 'double movement'. In keeping with Polanyi's analysis, it is, after all, this first stage that has prompted the second stage of this movement, namely the social reaction to it by individuals and groups of supporters, who would self-identify as being against modern football, and who, in a number of cases, have mobilised politically against it. Before I consider this counter-movement, however, I open this chapter by exploring the ways in which Margaret Thatcher's reconfiguration of British capitalism underpinned the 'great transformation' of English football, and encouraged the socialisation of 'market realities' by the game's elites both at a club and national level.

Football's popularity amongst England's predominately male, working-class enclaves moved the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm to describe the sport as being as 'embedded within British working-class life as the rise of the socialist movement, the Labour Party and trade unionism' (Hobsbawm 1978: 281–282). It is perhaps no surprise then, that as large parts of Britain's working classes felt the effects of, and reacted to processes of deindustrialisation and economic crisis in the 1970s, this unrest was reflected on the terraces of England's football grounds. Although, as Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1988: 4) have observed, 'youthful misbehaviour' was a feature of Britain's football terraces since the 1950s, by the late 1970s, this had escalated to regular and bloody bouts of violence both at home and abroad. A narrative of 'crisis' was constructed amongst political elites in Westminster. Football became a 'law and order issue' and its fans potential criminals. In response to this 'crisis', police powers were strengthened and personal liberties curtailed. Crucially, and tragically, it would be the political reaction to this violence that would result in English football's nadir: the Hillsborough disaster and the deaths of 96 fans of Liverpool FC as they

attended their team's FA Cup semi-final with Nottingham Forest in Sheffield.

The immediate response by senior officials from South Yorkshire Police was to blame hooliganism and heavily inebriated, ticketless Liverpool fans: a fraudulent message repeated with glee by a section of the British tabloid press, unyielding in its support for the police and the Thatcher government over matters of law and order (Williams 2014: 284). Such claims were symptomatic of a broader attitude prevalent at the time amongst senior figures within the government, the police and the press. Football fans, like those on strike at places such as Orgreave and Wapping, were regarded as 'enemies of the state' by the government, and treated as potential hooligans. To this end, it was considered far more important to maintain law and order than to ensure the safety of supporters.

Survivors and witnesses of the tragedy, however, maintained that the disaster was in fact caused by a ground unfit-for-purpose and a systematic failure of on-duty police officers to manage the crowd adequately. These claims were initially vindicated by the chair of the inquiry set up to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the tragedy, Lord Justice Taylor in his interim report (HM Government 1989). When the original inquests recorded a verdict of 'accidental death', however, the culpability of those who were responsible for policing the semi-final was obviated. After years of campaigning by the families, friends and fellow supporters of those who died in Sheffield, it took the findings of the Hillsborough Independent Panel to finally force the government to quash this original verdict and open up a fresh inquiry. At its conclusion in April 2016, the jury found unanimously that the Liverpool fans were not to blame. It was instead senior on-duty officials from the South Yorkshire police force who the jury ruled had been guilty of gross negligence in their duty of care. Their incompetent co-ordination and management of the match had contributed directly to the large-scale loss of life and injuries sustained by more than 400 fans on the day of the disaster. Returning a verdict of 'unlawful killing', the inquiry vindicated the 27-year campaign to deliver justice for the 96 Liverpool fans who died.

Hillsborough was the last in a tragic series of disasters that had befallen the British public during Margaret Thatcher's time in power, and like

many of these other public tragedies, illustrated in stark terms, Polanyi's warning concerning the dangers of allowing the market mechanism to serve as the sole director of the fate of humans (Polanyi 1944/2001: 76). By the end of the 1980s, many football fans – reflecting the working-class communities from which they were principally drawn – had been 'shoved about, used indiscriminately, or even left unused' (ibid.), as the Thatcher government set about dismantling those institutions designed to protect society from the worst excesses of market capitalism.

For King (1997: 74–75) and Scraton (1999/2009: 241), Hillsborough was the culmination of the neoliberal policies rolled out by Margaret Thatcher's government throughout the 1980s. The commitment of her Conservative government to the 'free market' meant the promotion of an economy unencumbered by the state and its regulatory institutions. Somewhat paradoxically, however, reordering this relationship would mean actively *strengthening* the state. For the supposedly 'free market' to flourish, a state was required strong enough to:

Unwind the coils of social democracy and welfarism that had fastened around the free economy; to police the market order; to make economy more productive; and uphold social and political authority (Gamble 1994: 40)

These observations are important because they link neatly with Polanyi's own claim concerning 'the myth' of the self-regulating market. Although the so-called 'self-regulating market' may demand that society divides into separate economic and political spheres, Polanyi (1944/2001: 74) argued that such a demand is based upon a fallacy. Every economic system requires some degree of social regulation. As Watson (2005: 145) has pointed out, even in advanced economies where the accumulation of capital is the main driving force of economic activity, such a regime is only made possible by a multitude of extra-economic regulations. For Block (2003: 297), 'market societies must construct elaborate rules and institutional structures' and therefore 'the economy has to be embedded in law, politics, and morality'. Therefore, the issue confronting public officials is not whether they should intervene or not, but rather *what type* of regulation they choose to implement (Cangiani 1994: 21). Rolling out her neoliberal reforms across the British state, Thatcher elected to

relieve the state of its former regulatory and protective functions, and as Jessop (2001: 217) argued, afford it instead the role of ‘night watchman’ so as to subject society to the logic and laws of the market.

In Thatcher’s free market paradise, profitability was prioritised over public safety. Operators were too busy making money to concern themselves with the health and well-being of their patrons, and it was barely surprising that all manner of disasters and incidents started to befall the British public (King 1998: 74–75). Strikingly and tragically, each separate public inquiry into these incidents came to the same conclusion. The deaths caused by the fires at Bradford City’s Valley Parade Stadium in 1985 and the Kings Cross London Underground Station two years later, the capsizing of the aptly-named *Herald of Free Enterprise* ferry also in 1987, and the Piper Alpha oilrig disaster the following year, all found that a lax and negligent attitude towards health and safety was to blame for the loss of life suffered. Had correct procedures been followed and preventative measures been taken by the respective authorities, then these deaths could have been avoided.

Hillsborough was the last of these public tragedies during Thatcher’s time in office, and these self-same attitudes of negligence and corporate irresponsibility robbed those Liverpool fans of what Polanyi termed, ‘the protective covering of cultural institutions’ (Polanyi 1944/2001: 76). Just as Polanyi had predicted, without this protection from the effects of a malaise of corporate irresponsibility and acute social dislocation, humans perished – just as they had in Bradford, London, the North Sea and the English Channel. In fact, insofar as Hillsborough was concerned, government officials appeared to be worried only with protecting those institutions that had failed in their duty of care. When Lord Taylor’s interim report was published, Thatcher herself raised private alarm at ‘the devastating criticism’ that Taylor had levelled at the South Yorkshire police force for their handling of the disaster (Thatcher, cited in The Hillsborough Independent Panel 2012: 199).

Such a response reveals a great deal not simply as to the prevailing antipathy towards football supporters but also the politics of Thatcherism itself. For Jessop, Bonnett, Bromley and Ling (1988: 88–89), Thatcherism was a project designed to manage the crisis-ridden British state. It was therefore deemed politically necessary to suppress those marginalised or at the very least, *marginalisable* – groups that could be singled-out as being

responsible for these crises. Football supporters, as well as militant trade unionists and striking miners, all fell into this category, and police chiefs were granted new powers and instruments by government officials as a means of controlling what Thatcher herself referred to as these ‘enemies within’ (Conn 2013: 111). For King (1998: 78), Thatcher’s ‘strong state’ was to rid society of these individuals, and reinforce the social boundaries that held back their ‘bestial essences’.

Given the degree of protection afforded to those responsible for implementing these authoritarian measures, it is perhaps hardly surprising that the final report published by Lord Taylor the following year was far less critical of those South Yorkshire police officers on duty on 15 April 1989. Taylor’s recommendations instead focused upon stadium safety and the failure to adequately manage the capacity of terraced areas. Its chief recommendation, however, would be the one that changed the landscape of English professional football. By the start of the 1994/95 season, all grounds hosting matches in the first and second tiers of English football were to be all-seated (HM Government 1990: 175). In the light of Lord Taylor’s interim report into the cause of the disaster, this was certainly an unusual recommendation. For while Taylor was keen to absolve Liverpool fans of any blame that had been attributed to them, his recommendations appeared to imply that standing had caused the fatalities at Hillsborough, rather than the loss of police control and a neglect of public health and safety. Although Lord Taylor’s measures would go on to reduce (although, it must be said, not completely eliminate) fatalities, Cloake and White (2014) note that the introduction of all-seated stadia has done little to change the attitudes towards football supporters by those responsible for enforcing law and order.

Post-Crisis Football: ‘The Great Transformation’ of the English Game

Relieving the pressure upon the police, the recommendations laid out in the final Taylor Report also gave the Football Association (hereafter, the FA) and its clubs, the impetus through its 1991 *Blueprint for the Future of Football*, to set about attracting ‘a more affluent consumer possessing more of what, historically, have been thought of as “middle

class” aspirations and values’ (Football Association 1991: 8). To seal English football’s ‘great transformation’ its followers were to be treated as *consumers* rather than simply fans. This however would necessitate a ‘substantial investment to provide a stock of stadia more appropriate in size and quality to the demands of [this] more discerning leisure market’ (Football Association 1991: 41). Hillsborough had not been a stadium alone in its dilapidation. The majority of England’s football grounds were damp, creaking relics of Edwardian England: ‘well short of the standards of comfort and quality provided at practically all over types of leisure and entertainment venues in the country’ (ibid.).

Despite its loyal customer base, clubs accrued losses on a regular basis (*The Economist* 1989: 29), which left many clubs unable to fund the improvements demanded by Lord Taylor through their own means. Faced with the possibility of many clubs going bust, the government duly stepped in and sanctioned the use of public money to fund these statutory ground improvements (Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport 1999). This was a decisive moment in the modernisation of English football and would enable clubs to be more financially minded than they had ever been before. If investment was injected into England’s stock of football stadia, then clubs themselves could not only meet the recommendations laid out by the Taylor Report but also actually enhance the long-term revenues of the clubs concerned. The direct effect upon fans was that this marketisation granted clubs the opportunity to phase out or modify the behaviour of their ‘old’ working-class supporters in favour of a more affluent, ‘consumer’ of the game. According to the FA, with this investment, clubs could

[1] attract to football matches additional supporters, whose choice of attendance is more greatly influenced by the quality of the facilities than the football itself... [2] charge higher admission prices to those seeking greater levels of convenience and comfort... [3] increase the levels of catering and merchandising sales... [4] raise additional income from hospitality, conferencing, banqueting and executive facilities... and [5] derive income potential from non-football related sports and entertainment activities. (Football Association 1991: 42)

In short, English clubs were to be run not as sporting or recreational institutions, but principally as revenue-maximising businesses. Of course, performance on the pitch remained important, but only insofar as it would determine the financial health of the club and its overall level of profitability. ‘The glory game’ once wryly observed by Hunter Davies (1972) was instead to be recast in terms of a chrematistic culture that emphasised a neoliberal logic of accumulation and material self-enhancement. Crucially, for the game in England to realise these commercial rationalities, however, it would require a combination of state regulation (which it received through the implementation of the Taylor Report), self-governance (laid out in the FA’s *Blueprint*) and public investment.

These measures demonstrate the way in which state actors institutionalise market economies. Developing Polanyi’s analysis, Jessop notes how ‘extra-economic forms’ are often ‘interiorised within and structurally coupled to the market economy’ (Jessop 2001: 215). Post-Hillsborough, political and economic elites both inside and outside the game created an incentive structure that both legitimatised and rewarded the newfound accumulative and acquisitive tendencies of England’s leading clubs. Of these ‘extra-economic forms’, no one has been more powerful than Rupert Murdoch’s Sky Corporation. While investors from the United States, Russia and the United Arab Emirates would in time come to skew the wealth of the sport in the twenty-first century, it is unlikely that they would have had the appetite to do so without the investment and global reach offered by Sky. Yet, it is unlikely that Sky itself would have seized the opportunity afforded to it without either the political framework put in place by both the British government and Football Association, or the reproduction of neoliberal market norms that instilled within clubs, what Polanyi (1947) described as a ‘market mentality’. It would be this framework that, crucially, would seal ‘the great transformation’ of the English game.

The socialisation of neoliberal rationalities by England’s biggest clubs matter because the ‘market mentality’ that it has produced has gone on to create ever-widening inequality between the wealthiest of these clubs and the rest of the clubs in the league pyramid (Platts and Smith 2010; Szymanski 2010). Remarking upon this inequality, Conn (2001: 23) added that across four divisions, while a handful of England’s leading

clubs have been able to make tens of millions of pounds in television money, more than half of the rest clubs have faced the prospect of insolvency and liquidation. Even the more recent Financial Fair Play measures introduced by the game's European governing body, UEFA, to ensure that clubs spend within their means (UEFA 2012: 2) have consolidated rather than curbed this imperative of revenue-maximisation. Despite its emphasis upon financial discipline, the FFP rules have led to a ramping up of commercialisation overseas, away from their traditional markets at home. Keen to boost their competitiveness on the pitch and their overall profitability, Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City, Everton and Tottenham Hotspur have all embarked upon pre-season tours of less-saturated, 'emerging' football markets in East Asia, the United States and Australia.

Although in keeping with the global character and appeal of the game (Giulianotti and Robertson 2009; Goldblatt 2007), this has nevertheless led to a rupture, or what Polanyi termed a 'disembedding' of social relations, most notably between the local working-class communities that birthed and for so long sustained these clubs, and the now global audiences to which they are increasingly oriented. Here, the observations that D. Kennedy and P. Kennedy (2010: 185) have made are insightful. As they suggested, the struggle between economy and society in capitalism strips the community 'asset' (the club) or 'need' (the game) away from its wider social relations, and reinserts it instead within a market-mediated activity where business motives dominate, corrupt and distort the said community asset. England's space-age stadiums, reconstructed in the wake of the Taylor Report, bear testament to such a process and today serve as monuments to global capitalism. Designed with the hard economics of the 'matchday experience' in mind rather than the cross-generational, cultural ritual of 'going to the game', these arenas have been shorn of local signifiers, projecting instead homogenised images of 'global' products and services that can be consumed almost anywhere the match is being watched across the world. The alliances that clubs have formed are now with distinctly *global* brands rather than the traditional local concerns, enabling them to extract wealth not simply from their traditional constituencies but to create and penetrate new markets.

It is hardly surprising then that as the global marketisation of English football continues unchecked, many fans feel increasingly marginalised by

their clubs. If, as Polanyi predicted, the formation of market economies has created social tensions, these are being countered by increasing numbers of supporters who are taking a stand against modern football. It is to the cultural politics of those who would self-identify as being 'AMF' that I turn my attention to in the final part of this chapter. Here, I consider what the second phase of Polanyi's 'double movement' looks like in terms of English football. I problematise what it means to be 'against modern football' and the challenges that it raises, before concluding with an assessment of its prospects of reclaiming the English game from the financial interests that presently dominate it.

Reclaiming the Game: The Movement 'Against Modern Football'

It is worth noting that there is, of course, a deep sense of nostalgia invoked by the commercialisation of the game. This, as I shall note, can be problematic, but it does nevertheless speak to a politics of exclusion and has prompted groups of supporters to mobilise and resist attempts to subjugate football to the laws of the market. In framing the response to 'modern football', however, it is important that a point of clarification is made in terms of the *character* of this response; in other words, what the AMF movement is *not*. There is arguably a tendency amongst those calling for a less commercialised game to reify the 'casual' culture. Emphasising a shared preference for a clearly defined style of clothing and music, this culture revolved around the collective experience and ritual of meeting up and going to the game with 'the lads' (Thornton 2003) and provided a deliberately more aggressive and masculine form of fandom (King 1997). Therefore, to associate this sub-culture with a political mobilisation 'against modern football' is to fail to capture fully the nuance of this movement.

Although a number of valid and justified claims in respect to 'modern football' have been made by fans, on social media, blogs or through fanzines, many of these fail to offer a coherent remedy to the financialisation and inequality that is endemic within the English game. Indeed, it might be argued that just as 'modern football' has created a new, more

'consumer-minded' fan, it has also succeeded in recasting a specific and more clearly defined 'outsider' fan that might otherwise self-identify as being 'against modern football'. The tension here of course is that these different groups of fans are *as* embedded within the market system as the other, only at different points of consumption. Furthermore, there remains a tendency for all fans to rationalise the regimes of accumulation that football elites have created to allow their own teams to compete on the pitch. These contradictions are reinforced further when fans continue to subscribe to *Sky Sports*, and/or pay the exorbitant ticket prices demanded by clubs. While these contradictions exist amongst supporters, the tension at the heart of the 'people's game' will remain unresolved.

To conclude the chapter here would only serve to chime with the 'pessimism' that Gramsci (1971/2005: 174–175) noted concerning the socialisation of 'market realities', and Polanyi's (1977: 84) own remarks concerning the manner in which the market, together with its attendant logic, reduces the human capacity for imagination. To overcome this pessimism, it is therefore necessary to consider some of the ways in which English football might be reclaimed, and in Polanyian terms, re-embedded within the social relations that have traditionally underpinned it. It is only appropriate then that in the final part of this chapter, Polanyi's work is developed as a means of underpinning the different ways in which this renewal of the English game might be achieved.

Polanyi's work is particularly appealing since it can be used to develop a framework that accommodates those independent fan groups, supporter unions and increasing numbers of fan-owned and co-operative clubs that are already reapplying the cultural and social value of football. Indeed, in many respects, these clubs have demonstrated Polanyi's claims regarding 'embeddedness'. Although the circumstances that prompted fans to mobilise may be different (compare e.g. AFC Wrexham and FC United of Manchester, and Portsmouth FC and AFC Wimbledon), they all share a common realisation that clubs are not merely spaces of economic exchange, but are in fact *always embedded* within social relations (Block 2003: 276).

The social re-institutionalisation of clubs by these groups of fans returns us back to Polanyi's observation concerning the formation of the self-regulating market. In the opening part of this chapter, I discussed how the commercialisation of the English game was not inevitable, but rather a

carefully constructed response to the narrative of ‘crisis’ orchestrated by political elites and reproduced by those responsible for governing the game in England. The recommendations laid out in the final publication of the Taylor Report in 1990, together with the strategy laid out in the FA’s *Blueprint* the following year, socialised clubs with a newfound ‘market mentality’, in keeping with the neoliberal rationalities rolled out across the British state. In understanding the ‘great transformation’ of English football, this is an important point. Developing the work of Polanyi, Block (2003: 282) notes how ‘there can be no analytically autonomous economy’, let alone any self-fulfilling ‘logic of the market or the logic of the economy’. Rather, any process of economic integration requires a correspondent social system and a process of socialisation always institutes the economy (J. R. Stanfield and J. B. Stanfield 2006: 36).

If this is an important point in understanding English football’s modernisation, it is also significant in terms of its renewal. Crucially, it suggests that if there is the sufficient political and social will to reverse the chrematistic excesses of the modern game, then the space opens up to socialise an alternative, more culturally embedded political economy of English football. It is not the purpose of this chapter to offer a distinct manifesto against modern football. The excesses and inequalities of English football are experienced in different ways and intersect with multiple sites of struggle and contestation. The chief insight that Polanyi brings into our understanding of modern football is that reform of the game and a commitment to deliver football back into the hands of supporters is politically and culturally contingent.

Strikingly, a similar observation is made by the independent fanzine, STAND. Aligning itself clearly with the AMF movement, it makes it clear that it does not want the game to return to the days when it was ‘blighted by hooliganism, racism and deathtrap stadiums’ (STAND 2014). The editorial acknowledges that English football had to change, but it warns that ‘the scale of change has and continues to take the game away from the many who so enjoy it’ (ibid.). The emphasis placed here upon ‘the many who enjoy it’ is important because it speaks of a more inclusive game, and at least the potential of an alternative to the aggressive ‘market mentality’ that has dominated English football for the last quarter of a century.

Comprising of ordinary fans of clubs engaging in a common effort to re-embed the game in a new, and more democratic fashion, this would at the very least, enable politically progressive alternatives to be narrated (Watson 2014: 620). The success of fan-owned clubs and supporter unions has demonstrated how, increasingly, this is now far more than just a theoretical possibility.

Conclusions

Of course, this nascent movement faces several challenges only outlined here, not least between competing political and economic interests. Nevertheless, any pessimism as to the scale and extent of the market should not be allowed to temper the possibility of political reform and social change. This, I suggest, is Polanyi's chief legacy to football. The seemingly unassailable power that the economic actors within the game are currently assumed to have is actually *only* the result of a market structure institutionalised or, in Polanyi's terms, 'embedded' by political elites. As those behind the mobilisation of these alternative fan-owned clubs, supporter unions and movements have all demonstrated, however, real power and the capacity for transformative change rests not in the neoliberal market but in the hands of the supporters who make the game what it is.

It is here then that Polanyi's work provides a note of optimism for those keen to reclaim the game and deliver a more socially democratic form of football. If, as I argued earlier in this chapter, 'modern football' required a distinct political structure in order to frame its own transformation, then the space exists – should there be the political and social will for a counter-movement that offers an alternative, more culturally embedded game. Despite the challenges that these movements face, there is at least the *possibility* of political reform and social change within the game. The pessimism that 'there is no alternative' to the market might reflect the present condition of English football, but it needs not direct the potential for its transformation. Indeed, as Polanyi demonstrated, key to football's transformation is the renewal of its culture, and the social relations that, prior to its marketisation, underpinned it.

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3

'I Love Going to Watch Norwich': The Experiences of a Transgender Football Fan

Jayne Caudwell

Introduction

Football fans' love of football has received limited explicit academic scrutiny. The tradition of football studies tends to be built upon research, especially in the UK, which demonstrates how working-class men appear to enjoy the aggression and violence associated with fighting – for one's team, club, country and imagined territories. In these early analyses, there is the suggestion that fans gain satisfaction from their symbolic resistance to middle-class governance of the game, and, more broadly, resistance to middle-class governance of their (un)employment, education opportunities and daily lives (cf. Armstrong 1998; Burford 1992; Dunning et al. 1986; King 1997). These studies

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of so-called football hooliganism infer pleasure as significant to some football-fan (sub)cultures.

More recently, there is evidence of reference to the explicit love of football (cf. Farred 2002; Pope 2013). Pope (2013), in comparing the experiences of women fans of men's football and of men's rugby union, makes an important, and timely, intervention on behalf of women supporters. Her findings demonstrate the intricacies, depth and range of women's fandom. For many of her research participants, their involvement is epitomised by the belief that football is 'the love of my life'. Before Pope's work, Farred (2002) explored his own lifelong love of Liverpool FC: 'the pain and pleasure of living and dying with every Liverpool result' (Farred 2002: 13). As a Black South African, he unpicks his enduring 'long distance love' of the players, teams and club. His auto-biographical account highlights his internal, complex anguish surrounding Liverpool's initial reluctance to sign a Black player and how his love of, passion for and racial politics troubled his enduring fandom.

In this chapter, I draw on qualitative research with a Norwich City Football Club (UK) fan: Paula.¹ In itself, this seems unremarkable, however, Paula self-identifies as transgender, transsexual and queer.² Many football-fan (sub)cultures are known to be hostile and abusive environments (Jones 2008; Ruddock 2005; Silk 2008), especially for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) communities (Caudwell 2011, 2012a). Moreover, transgender, transsexual and queer subjectivities are profoundly stigmatised in most societies and cultures. This makes Paula's fandom interesting because her voice is from the far margins. From a critical socio-cultural point of view, there is value in reading about Paula's mostly positive experiences of football fandom.

From a policy perspective, it is important to make links with Paula's long-term football fandom and current efforts that seek to make football (in the UK) more inclusive. The Football Association (FA), in its quest to facilitate the initiative *Opening Doors and Joining In*, addresses

¹ I have documented this research elsewhere (Pringle et al. 2015), and parts of this chapter are drawn from these previous discussions.

² At the time of interview, Paula was self-identified as a transgender-queer woman.

transgender issues through policy aimed at the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. This is highlighted in their idea of 'LGBT football'. In a statement, the FA (2016) makes the following points under the heading – *Widening lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) representation in football*: 'An individual's sexual orientation or gender identity should never be a barrier to participating in, and enjoying, our national sport'.

To that effect, The FA will:

Identify boundaries within football that prevent LGBT people from engaging with the sport and ensure that every opportunity is given to enable members of gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans communities to participate and progress within their chosen area of participation in football. Combat all forms of homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic language and behaviour – whether by spectators, players, coaches or other participants. (Football Association 2016)

Specific to transgender active involvement in football, the FA, in November 2014, launched their Transgender and Transsexual Policy. Funke Awoderu, Equality Manager for the FA, commented publicly that the policy is 'a pioneering move for football and one which is designed to help give visibility to the trans community' (Football Association 2016). This policy was further refined in 2015 – *The Football Association Policy on Trans People in Football* (Football Association 2016). These policy initiatives intended to promote transgender equality, prevent transgender discrimination and encourage participation. They follow on from a broader government-driven *Charter for Action* introduced on 4 March 2011: *Tackling Homophobia and Transphobia in Sport*. These institutional moves towards inclusion are echoed at an international level as was evidenced when FIFA recognised Johnny 'Jayiah' Saelua as a transgender player (Smith 2014). Saelua played centre-back for American Samoa in the Men's FIFA World Cup qualification rounds in 2011. As reported in the press (Bagchi 2011; Montague 2011), Jayiah is '*fa'afafine*, biologically male but identified as a third sex widely accepted in Polynesian culture. She is the first transgender player to compete in a World Cup' (Bagchi 2011: 9). A comment from the team coach, Thomas Rongen, furthers this public recognition of Jayiah: 'I've really got

a female starting at centre back. Can you imagine that in England or Spain?' (Tansgenderzone 2016).

I begin this chapter with a brief discussion of terminology as it relates to transgender. From this starting point, I provide a view of Paula's experiences of fandom. Generally, she has positive experiences of following football in the UK. Although her process of 'coming out' as transgender was slightly troublesome, she continues to share many of the pleasures of spectatorship experienced by non-transgender fans. I finish the chapter wary of current policy initiatives that makes claims to transgender equality, inclusion and participation.

Transgender 101

As I have argued elsewhere (Caudwell 2012a), naming gender and sexuality is a political process, which often serves to produce, and reproduce dominant social and cultural divisions. Over the years, a variety of terms and acronyms have emerged to define, and explain, the range and complexity of human gender and sexuality. Consequently, individual and community identities and subjectivities are produced through language and labelling (dominant discourses). Historically, this is especially the case for LGBTQI, and this hailing in to existence can be fraught with tension. Despite some labelling having hugely pejorative effects, terms and acronyms remain important to LGBTQI communities and individuals. A quick search of the Internet provides examples of 'definitions' that are positively generative through self-identification and self-naming. Here is a useful example from the transgender community:

Transgender: A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behaviour is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. 'Trans' is shorthand for 'transgender'.³

³ Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, not a noun, thus 'transgender people' is appropriate but 'transgenders' is often viewed as disrespectful.

Transgender Man: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a man (see also 'FTM' – female-to-male).

Transgender Woman: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a woman (see also 'MTF' – male-to-female).

(Transequality 2014)

In the UK, the Gender Recognition Act 2004, which came into effect on 4 April 2005, was a response to a European Court of Human Rights ruling (11 July 2002). Under the European Convention on Human Rights, specifically in the case *Christine Goodwin v The United Kingdom*, the UK Government was found guilty of discrimination based on the violations of Articles 8 (Privacy) and 12 (Marriage). As a result of this ruling, the Gender Recognition Act 2004 provides legal status to transsexual people by recognising, in law, their acquired gender (sex). Sport is not exempt from legislative frameworks and many governing bodies of sport, including the four football associations within the UK, have policy documents that seek to align with this legislation. Away from legal parameters, transgender people are gaining positive treatment within the UK popular culture with transgender women receiving recent coverage (e.g. Bethany Black, Paris Lees, Emily Brothers and Kellie Maloney). In men's professional football in England, Sophie Cook is the first transgender woman to work in the Premier League. She is the team photographer for AFC Bournemouth and talks openly about the acceptance of her transition within this elite football environment (The Bournemouth Echo 2016).

Methodology

In many spheres, many of us no longer have to defend our qualitative stance. In some circles, qualitative methodologies are automatically assumed as creditable, and interviewing one person is accepted as legitimate: 'The number of participants in a qualitative interview study can range from 1 to 100' (Markula and Silk 2011: 93). Debate has turned, instead, to the inner workings of qualitative research. For example, Markula and Silk highlight these interior mechanisms

through their advocacy of the: ‘7Ps: Purpose, Paradigms, Process, Practice, Politics of Interpretation, Presentation and the Promise of qualitative research’ (Markula and Silk 2011: 11). Although these constituent parts appear as distinct and separate entities within a neat, easy-to-grasp rubric (7Ps), they are worth bearing in mind, not least because they open ways to appreciate the value of small-scale qualitative research.

This chapter draws from one interview that can be described as ‘purposeful research that is meaningful to a range of communities’ (Markula and Silk 2011: 11). The ‘range of communities’ might include those related to football, fandom, gender, sexualities, transgender, transsexual and queer. Notably, the interview research and related correspondence is set within the bounds of interpretive constructions of meaning-making; in other words, how Paula and I understand, interpret, tell and re-tell her experiences of supporting Norwich City FC. It is undeniable that we are both implicated in how her football-fandom experiences are captured in this chapter. The representation is inevitably subjective, relativist and partial (cf. Denzin 2010; Richardson 2000). Also inevitably, there is a political matter in this small-scale research. Paula’s fandom must be considered through an appreciation of her shifting and fluid sex-gender-desire subjectivities (queer, boy, gay, transgender, man, transsexual, woman and queer⁴), and the absence of a similar standpoint within football fandom literatures. Only recently have we witnessed alternatives to the many male-dominated studies by, for and with men (cf. Jones 2008; Pope 2010, 2013).

Paula’s Football-Fan Biography: ‘I Got Outed, Someone Posted It on the Forum’

It is important to get a sense of Paula’s football-fan biography. The following extract from the interview transcript provides valuable reference to football in Paula’s life:

⁴ Importantly, these shifting subjectivities must not be read as linear or chronological, despite appearing so through written words on a page.

I hated football until I was about 8 years old and something suddenly switched in me. There were 2 things that piqued my interest. One of them was Crystal Palace getting to the FA Cup final in 1990, although I didn't end up supporting them. The other was England making the World Cup semi-finals that summer and all the fervour around that. I started playing at school and it was all I'd do at any break time.

When I was 10, I realised I was transgender. I hadn't really noticed this before and I hadn't been an especially feminine child. I was in some ways, but not in that kind of much-more recognised girly-boy kind of way [...] I'd been playing football for 3 years or so, and decided I wanted to have a go at playing competitively. And so, I joined Town FC. I just found that there was something about me that didn't fit. I was hiding my queerness, I guess. I didn't really think I was gay, but I didn't have a framework to understand my gender and my sexuality so I just kept it hidden and football was one of my means of doing that; if I played football, well, I intuitively knew that I'd get an easier ride from the guys at my school and the guys on the team. But I found I didn't really get on with the guys on the team. If they don't like you, they won't pass the ball to you.

By year 10 [aged 15], I just stopped playing, except once a week in PE [Physical Education] lesson. I found that there wasn't really a place for me. I started exploring music more and started reading Oscar Wilde, and started to discover this queer culture that suited me and so there was this weird tension. I would go with my dad; by this time I'd decided, for some reason, I was going to support Norwich, and my dad and I would go to 3 or 4 games a season.

I got a video, for my birthday, of highlights of Norwich City games and Justin Fashanu's famous goal against Liverpool was one of the real highlights of it. I remember the first time I watched it being open-mouthed at how brilliant it [goal] was. Justin Fashanu was a name I kept hearing as I grew up in the 90s. He kind of came on to my radar and I gradually twigged just through innuendo, I didn't really read the tabloids; I didn't know about Justin's frequent tabloid appearances. But, through innuendo, I picked up that Justin was this gay player. His suicide in 1998 hit me really hard; he was a hero of mine. I was 16. It hit me very hard. It just seemed like a horrible crushing turn of events at that age and it just made me think: Where is the place for me as a queer person who likes football and wants to be involved with it?

Paula's football-fan biography is both usual and unusual. As Farred (2002: 6) reveals, such initial commitment can be understood in terms of the 'arbitrariness of fandom'. It reflects patterns of childhood engagement, family and early affiliation with a particular team. In addition, it suggests a so-called induction period (Crawford 2004), which has been followed by her sustained support of Norwich City FC. At the same time, Paula has had to negotiate the highly gendered and (hetero-)sexualised nature of men's professional football.

During the interview, Paula talked about coming out at different times in her life. At 16, she came out as 'gay and a cross dresser'. Reflecting on these identities, she said about 'gay': 'It just seemed the nearest and best understood.' The reason for 'crossdresser' was because transgender was not a term that was available to her at that time and transvestite had connotations she disliked. Together, gay and crossdresser, allowed for 'all sorts of queer behaviour'. Later, I asked Paula if transgender was a good word for her. She was adamant: 'The idea of transgender saved my life, really.' Paula began to identify as transgender and go to Norwich City games more frequently:

My transgender identity and exploration didn't stop me going to games. I mean I would go to the games as male, which is how I was living at the time. I had long hair, but otherwise was male-identified and recognisable as male. I didn't tell my friends at the games that I had this parallel identity. (From interview transcript)

In 2009, Paula started to come out as transsexual. She remembers transitioning on a Saturday: 'I think it was the 2nd of May; it was the day I emailed all my friends saying: I'm Paula now.' Her football-fan friends were not included in this email. However, a couple of them were Facebook-friends with her and they noticed that she had changed her profile details. Changing Facebook information was actually a 'nice' way for Paula to come out. It meant she could come out to everybody without necessarily having to utter these loaded words: 'I am transsexual.'

Before Paula was able to explore her own ways of coming out to the rest of her football-fan friends, she got outed by another fan on a football-fan forum. Paula was active on the forum and enjoyed the exchanges of information, football knowledge and the appropriately jovial nature of this Internet space. She thought the forum was a place where her transition from male to female did not stop her interacting with other football fans. At the same time, Paula was writing a column for a national newspaper. The column was about her experiences of transitioning. Another fan posted a link to the newspaper column on to the football forum and he wrote: 'look, this is that person's column'.

A few people said 'ah you cruel bastard just because he looks like a girl' and a few other people said 'no, it really is his thing.' In the end I had to go on there and say 'yeah, I wrote that.' And, then there was this really weird thing because the forum hadn't had to deal with someone transitioning before. Actually, it worked out really well, because I don't know how I would have handled coming out to all of my friends at the game. I ended up being really glad it had happened. (From interview transcript)

With time, Paula used the forum less and less. Instead, she switched to Facebook and she would see fans she knew at games.

Paula: There is a big group of people I go with. One of them, my friend Luke; at Norwich they're all Luke's friends. Luke said, 'we all still want to see you and be your friends, if you want to have a chat, just drop me a line'. And I said, 'Luke, that's really lovely, but it's quite simple, I'm known as Paula, she and her and other than that you don't have to do anything'. Next time I saw them, I went to a home game, October that year against Middlesbrough. He said 'how do you want me to introduce you to everyone?' I said 'as Paula'. He said 'great'. I went to the game, I went to the pub with them afterwards, and we went to dinner together. It was really easy, really simple.

Author: Loads of blokes?

Paula: Yeah, they all treated me as female and that was that.

(From interview transcript)

The Pleasure of Being a Football Fan: 'I Love Going to Watch Norwich'

In his piece on Long Distance Love, Farred (2002: 6–17) described, through a language of love, 'growing up a Liverpool football club fan'. He referred to his 'beloved Liverpool' (Farred 2002: 6) and described his feelings as 'enduring love, blind, rock-solid faith, and abiding passion' (ibid.: 10). He told of his 'love affair with the central midfielders Graeme Souness and Steve McMahon' (ibid.: 7), and stressed that '[a]s much as I loved Keegan' (ibid.: 8), 'I love Graeme Souness above all other players' (ibid.: 17). Perhaps unsurprisingly, he was unable to explain 'the moment that I first fell in love' and he claimed that his is 'a love that was consummated before it was understood, narrativized, or even articulated' (ibid.: 11).

Verbalising what it is, exactly, that conjures 'enduring love, blind, rock-solid faith, and abiding passion' (Farred 2002: 10) is difficult, nearly impossible. As a researcher accessing the logics of such love, it is not easy. During the interview with Paula, I tried to search for some kind of rationale to explain her *love* for Norwich City FC and football:

Author: There's something about the game, watching the game, watching the team move the ball?

Paula: Yeah, very visceral, kind of aesthetic thing for me. I just love watching football. A really great team move or an individual run or [pause] there are so many things I love about football: that dynamic between the players and the crowd; just the sheer high drama of it. I don't like any of the culture that comes with it. But I just thought I love the sport so much that I just have to try and [pause] at worst find my own space in that culture and at best try to change it.

(From interview transcript)

Paula finds the 'creative possibilities' of football endearing. In a recent discussion, Kreft (2014) recognised the aesthetic appeal of football. He argued that 'aesthetic attraction of football is not a sign of alienation, manipulation or ideology – it is just what it appears to be: a sign of rare

pleasure' (Kreft 2014: 371). And yet, Paula points out that 'loads of my friends hate football because the sport doesn't have the distinctive aesthetic appeal that it has for me'. She also acknowledges that there are times when football has made her 'very embarrassed to like it' and that certain chants and songs make her 'wince', that she 'hates them'.

Paula has a friend, Ben (who was doing a PhD on the works of Thomas Pynchon). Ben is a Southampton FC supporter. Together they 'talk about football all night and literally, we'd have to go off on our own to sit in the football corner. It drove everybody crazy, but we really enjoyed it.' When I asked Paula if she liked having football knowledge and exchanging this knowledge with others, she said, 'absolutely, I love talking about football. I've always found, even in queer spaces or these kind of high-cultural spaces, people who like football as much as me; whether they're queer or not. Ben is a straight guy; he's always been in monogamous heterosexual relationships.'

Football, specifically 'fanspeak' (Ruddock 2005) can help change the boundaries of (football) citizenship. Ruddock (2005: 372) argued that some football fans might be 'willing to abandon certain elements of tradition to explore new ways of being'. For example, Ben and Paula appear to be abandoning their middle-class high culture; Ben abandons a traditional male-heterosexual football-fan identity; and Paula abandons explicitly queer subjectivities. Ruddock (2005), focusing on this idea of a suspension of tradition, explored the possibilities for pleasures based on cultural inclusion (e.g. football cultural inclusion). More specifically, he drew from Barthes, whose seminal text locates the political aspects of pleasure in the following dynamic: 'Imagine someone who abolishes within himself [sic] all barriers, all classes. All exclusions' (ibid., 372). Pleasure in this sense and for some people is about the willingness 'to desert what you are and what you know' (ibid., 375). Ben and Paula appear to do this when they 'talk about football all night'. It is their shared football fandom that affords these moments.

Paula and Ben's fanspeak and football-friendship provide one example of how traditional boundaries and distinctions surrounding gender and sexuality can dissolve. During the hours they spend together, recounting stories of Southampton FC and Norwich City FC, they both enjoy a form of football-fan citizenship. Paula's sense of belonging and cultural inclusion is held together by their football knowledge, their respect of

each other's knowledge, their joy in sharing, telling and listening to this wisdom. In this situation, they have abolished traditional and exclusionary categories of sex, gender and sexuality.

However, as Ruddock (2005) went on to discuss, these seemingly utopic moments can be fragile, especially when there are obdurate, unjust and unpleasant broader politics. Referring to football in Israel and the work of Sorek (2003), Ruddock (2005: 375) suggests that despite Arab fans feeling a sense of belonging in football stadia, their football fandom (collective citizenship) can never change their minority and inferior status in Israel. Momentarily, football fandom does dislocate and rupture notions of Israeli citizenship; however, it never permanently alters the oppressive relations of power, in the country. In this context, Ruddock (2005: 375) concludes: 'pleasure is based on the ability to build and defend, not abolish categories'.

In one of the follow-up emails with Paula, I asked her about 'standing on the terraces':

My favourite thing about standing on the terraces is the way I can vanish into the crowd. Everyone is focused on the match, so I can lose myself in conversation about the team and the tactics, the songs that people sing and the back-and-forth between the two sets of fans, incidents on and off the pitch. I like the way that my gender doesn't really matter, we're all fixated upon the match, and for this time, our individual and collective emotions are broadly the same. (Paula, email correspondence)

It is evident that Paula experiences multiple pleasures through fanspeak or *in situ* – at football stadia and on the terraces. However, from a critical perspective, some of these pleasures might conceal, through fantasies of liberal democracy (Ruddock 2005), the socio-cultural and socio-political unpleasant (e.g. the subordination of Arabs in Israel and transphobia in sport generally) as well as warn us 'of pleasure's conservative potential' (ibid., 384). However, Paula did not report experiences of abuse and harassment in terms of her own subjectivity, but she did find many aspects of football-fan culture unpalatable.

It might be useful to think about football-fandom pleasures as haunted by displeasures and the unpleasant. I am not promoting a

binary model of football-fan pleasure. Instead, I am suggesting that football-fan pleasures are evanescent, fluid and in-flux. Displeasures and the unpleasant are not only to do with broader regimes of social, cultural and political injustice (as in Israel), they are also about much smaller, intense moments of human indecency, which are often to do with sexism, misogyny, racism and xenophobia:

He [Ben] has this problem with football because he's an intellectual with a taste for modernist literature and how do you handle it when [pause], one story he recounts; one of the Portsmouth players was a guy called Lomana LuaLua who was Congolese and he went to play in the African Nations Cup and got malaria, Ben said, the next Southampton game there would be a big crowd singing 'LuaLua has got malaria'. (From interview transcript)

Paula also talked about her experiences of watching a League Cup game between Brighton and Hove Albion FC (BHAFC) and Gillingham FC. The game was at Brighton. It is common for away fans, in this case Gillingham, to sing homophobic songs at BHAFC home games. This is because the city of Brighton and Hove has the largest 'out' population of LGBTQI in the UK. Paula recounts what happened after a popular song ('Does your boyfriend know you're here?') was sung at Brighton fans: 'I heard someone yell, "oh fuck off, you bunch of pikeys", using this kind of regional stereotyping against Kent, and the Gypsy population there.' In other examples, she tells of when Norwich City FC plays Liverpool FC or Everton FC, songs about unemployment and theft are rife (the city of Liverpool is stereotyped in a way that exaggerates men's criminal activities). And, how away fans sing, to the tune of Sloop John B, 'I want to go home, Liverpool is a shithole.'

The incident, introduced above, surrounding the player LuaLua led to further discomfort and disgust for Paula, and her friend Ben:

The same player, he was playing for the Republic of Congo in the African Nations Cup and his son died during the tournament. Ben said he went to the next game and was really worried that people would sing songs. He was relieved to find that they did not. This is the kind of dilemma; it is

terrible, football culture is such that you can be a football fan and go to a game and feel a genuine sense of relief that nobody sings a song about somebody's infant son dying. The culture can be that abhorrent. (From interview transcript)

Many sport cultures, especially men's professional sports, are sites for discourses and displays of so-called banter. Football songs and chants in the UK are often aligned with, and framed through humour, the comical and funny. However, in his analysis of microaggressions and microinsults in men's cricket in England, Burdsey (2011: 273) argues: '[J]okes can underpin divisive and exclusionary aspects of sporting subcultures, and they represent a powerful and symbolic means by which minorities are marginalized from dominant player collectives.' Such jokes and joking are exemplars of Ruddock's (2005: 375) notion that 'pleasure is based on the ability to build and defend categories'.

It is often difficult for the spheres of gender and sexuality, and football to merge in productive ways for people who do not identify as heteronormative. Paula made this statement in the interview: 'The thing is, I like this queer counter-culture, but on the other hand I love football.' In a follow-up email, I asked her to explain this further. She wrote back, making the point that queer and football do not co-exist because 'mainstream football isn't queer at all' and that most queer spaces do not include football. Despite these disparities, Paula suggests that the 'gulf is ideal' because at football her gender diversity and queer sexuality are, for the time being, forgotten about, suspended: 'I spend a lot of my time reading, writing and thinking about queer culture and politics, and football could not be a better release from that.' She also added: 'one of my favourite things about going to the games is not worrying about it [her body]; I take far less time over my appearance when going to the football than I do when going almost anywhere else, which is very liberating'. For Paula, there are pleasures in this freedom, pleasure in forgetting, and unlike the rest of her daily life, Paula can, literally, 'vanish into the crowd'. She can become the observer of others and not the focus of often-judgemental observations and cruel banter, which has happened in other spheres of her life (e.g. walking home at night).

Conclusion

It has taken most governing bodies of sport a long time to devise and develop transgender policy. The FA is not exempt and we might conclude that those in positions of power have failed, for some time, to recognise transgender people as legitimate participants in football cultures. After many years of policing women's sexed bodies (Sex Testing and Gender Verification 1964–2004), the International Olympic Committee (IOC), in 2004, declared its interest in the rights of transsexual people by 'allowing "a person who has changed sex" to compete' (International Olympic Committee 2016) In May 2005, following the Gender Recognition Act 2004, the UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport released the document *Transsexual People and Sport: Guidance for Sporting Bodies*.

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 does help enable sport participation, but only for those individuals who decide to realise transition via medical processes. In other words, in order to compete individuals must fulfil certain anatomical criteria, which involve surgery and hormonal treatment. Critical commentators are scathing of this medical discourse, which propels much of transgender policy in sport (cf. Caudwell 2012b; Cavanagh and Sykes 2006), and debate continues over the rigid definitions set out in existing policy. For instance, the IOC under their definition of 'transsexual' set out absolute conditions required to meet their definition of maleness and femaleness. By reproducing, these medicalised criteria governing bodies close the doors to participants who chose not to follow such a conclusive journey of transition.

Ten years after the Gender Recognition Act 2004 2004, on 24 November 2014, The Football Association launched its *Transgender and Transsexual Policy*. The seven-page policy document on trans-people in football tends to focus on competitive football and players' participation. The document appropriates many clauses evident in existing policy documents (e.g. IOC, DCMS, UK Sport Council) and demands clearance from the FA for trans players over 16 years of age to participate in teams that match their acquired gender (sex). Trans-fandom does not appear in this document. Instead, it is covered implicitly in the broader

FA initiative *Opening Doors and Joining In*. This initiative, by embracing the LGBT community as a whole, reinforces notions of liberal democracy and the politics of diversity through a catch-all approach. Such strategies are often criticised for failing to meet the needs of specific groups because of the diluted nature of aims and lack of discernible objectives. Indeed, such policy can be described as ‘non-performing inclusion’ (Bury 2015).

Paula’s experiences of fandom reflect her everyday-lived experiences of football. During the interview process and post-interview correspondence, the subject of football policy on transgender and/or transsexual did not emerge as a topic of discussion. Paula, as with many fans with minority status, negotiates her own participation. This negotiation includes experiencing the known discriminations of sexism, misogyny, racism and homophobia that are ever-present in and around football stadia. Despite FA policy and individual football clubs’ policy on anti-discriminatory crowd behaviours, fans continue to witness and endure verbal and gesticular prejudice and abuse.

Qualitative research findings that give voice to marginalised groups, such as lesbian and gay fans, have gone some way to transforming policies of inclusion. For example, homophobia is no longer acceptable in football grounds and perpetrators should be ejected. And yet, we know very little of transgender peoples’ experiences and how transphobia operates in the football stadia. Paula provides insights of her positive experience of inclusion, which are largely encouraging. However, her experiences are contingent on her football-fan friends. In other words, it is segments of the football-fan community that endorse Paula’s fandom. Officially, transphobia in football grounds is dealt with via broader catch-all LGBT football policy documents, which we can easily criticise.

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4

The Italian Ultras: From Local Divisions to National Co-operation

Mark Doidge

In July 2014, the *Gazzetta dello Sport* journalist Andrea Monti (2014) suggested that Italian football was at ‘year zero’; it had to start again. This introspection was instigated by the Italian national team’s early exit from the World Cup in Brazil. The day after the *Azzurri* were eliminated in the first round, a Napoli fan, *Ciro Esposito*, died in hospital. A Roma fan had shot *Esposito* before the Italian cup final between Napoli and Fiorentina. The final was intended to showcase Italian football. Coming at the end of the Serie A league season, it brings together leading Italian clubs at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome. Unfortunately the final on 3 May 2014 showcased another side of Italian football. A confrontation occurred between a Roma fan, *Daniele De Santis*, and some Napoli fans, including *Esposito*. Shots were fired in the clash; three Napoli fans were injured, with *Esposito* dying from his wounds two months later. As

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a result of this violence, Napoli fans in the stadium became restless. There is a longstanding rivalry between Napoli and Roma fans, and many Neapolitans were concerned about their own safety and the well-being of their fellow fans. In the absence of official information, the Napoli fans started to agitate for the game to be delayed or abandoned. Various missiles, including flares, were thrown onto the pitch in order to disrupt the start of the match. The central symbol of these disturbances became the head of the Napoli *ultras*, Gennaro De Tommaso, nicknamed *Genny'a carogna* (Genny the swine), who was seen sitting astride the security fences. The authorities attempted to negotiate with *Genny'a carogna* in order to allow the game to commence. In the end, the Napoli captain Marek Hamšík persuaded the *ultras* to stop, and the game kicked off forty-five minutes late.

These scenes were reminiscent of a similar incident ten years earlier. The 2004 Rome derby between Roma and Lazio became nicknamed 'the derby of the dead child' after rumours circulated that the police had killed a child. The leading *ultras* of both teams pleaded with the players that the rumour was true and that they should not play the match. The Roma *ultras* (who included Esposito's alleged killer, Daniele De Santis) entered the field and publically tried to persuade Roma's talismanic captain, Francesco Totti, not to play the match. Totti was filmed mouthing 'if we play on, they'll kill us' to his coach Fabio Capello (Agnew 2007). From the centre circle, the referee phoned the head of the Italian League, Adriano Galliani, who agreed to abandon the match. After the game, *ultras* of both Lazio and Roma joined forces to attack the police.

These two events highlight a significant shift in the development of the *ultras*. What is occurring is a *Mentalità Ultras* (Doidge 2015), an *ultras* mentality that is unifying members of groups who would traditionally have been considered rivals. Although the traditional local divisions continue, an overarching *ultras* identity is forming. This *Mentalità Ultras* is emerging in opposition to various changes in football, particularly commercialisation and what is considered as state '*repressione*' (repression) in the shape of perceived Draconian laws and excessive policing. It is difficult to suggest all *ultras* are homogenous; there are many internal contradictions and interpretations (Numerato 2015).

Despite this, there are some broad umbrella protests. Even though they claim to represent the ‘authentic’ voice of football fans, they are uniting to maintain their own privileged position within the patrimonial structure of Italian football. Ultimately, they are continuing to engage in the forms of protest that are familiar to the movement – banners and violence – rather than constructive dialogue.

This chapter places the *ultras* within the wider governance of Italian football. It is argued that rather than fragmenting, *ultras* are uniting in new ways. Part of this process is not due to the internal dynamics, but to outside forces, namely *repressione* from the state and what they perceive to be as excessive policing. Ultimately, however, the *ultras* are not fighting to change the system, but to preserve their own privileged position and reify their identity. The chapter finishes with some alternative approaches to engaging with governance of Italian football and argues that co-operation and constructive dialogue between all parties involved in football would be a productive way forward for fans, authorities, and clubs.

The Governance of Italian Football

In order to understand the events that preceded the 2014 Italian cup final, it is important to place it in the wider governance context. Many of these issues are related to the ownership structure of Italian football clubs. The family approach to capitalism in Italy is replicated in football. Early in the sport’s development, clubs were incorporated into the corporate family of leading industrialists. This allowed them to extend their patronage to their workers, the local community and wider political society (Doidge 2015). This is clearly illustrated by the Agnelli family. Giovanni Agnelli established the car manufacturer Fiat in 1899. His son, Edoardo purchased Juventus in 1923. The club has been under the family ever since; the current president is Andrea Agnelli. Elsewhere, Olivetti and Pirelli became involved with AC Milan and Inter respectively in the 1930s. It is clear through Pirelli’s sponsorship of Inter’s jerseys today that these clubs remain part of the corporate structure, although new ownership structures are

arriving into Italian football with Asian capital taking over Inter and negotiating an acquisition of AC Milan.

The emergence of Silvio Berlusconi in the 1980s extended this football-industrial patronage model. Berlusconi made his money from housing developments, television and advertising. In 1986 he purchased AC Milan. He transformed the operation of the club by utilising his other businesses to incentivise fans and to promote the club (Scalia 2009). This signalled the entry of many new family business groups to purchase football clubs. The Tanzi family, who owned Parmalat, purchased Parma. Sergio Cragnotti, the owner of Cirio, became president of Lazio, while the oil tycoon Franco Sensi bought Roma. These new industrialists utilised their football clubs to extend their political connections and to promote their other businesses. This was demonstrated most spectacularly by Silvio Berlusconi who utilised his ownership of A. C. Milan to 'enter the field' of politics and became Italian Prime Minister. The extent of these entangled political and business networks was exposed after Italian football encountered a widespread financial crisis in the early twentieth century. The financial collapse of companies such as Parmalat and Cirio directly affected their clubs. Parma went bankrupt and Lazio faced financial problems for many years. Elsewhere, Napoli and Fiorentina both went bankrupt. The Florentine club was demoted to Serie C2 in 2001 while the former club of Maradona was relegated to Serie C1 in 2004. More importantly, this financial crisis exposed the fraudulent accounting methods used by clubs and the weakness of the federation at regulation (Foot 2006; Porro and Russo 2000). As a result of the familial nature of Italian capitalism, foreign ownership has not had the same impact as in England (see Millward 2011). Only Roma and Inter have seen foreign investment, and there is reported interest of Chinese investors to take a majority stake at AC Milan.

Unlike English football and its 'new directors' (King 1997), Italian football has not been driven purely by the profit motive. Instead, football provided an important vehicle for political patronage (Doidge 2015). This has led to an interesting relationship between fans and owners in Italy. Portelli (1993) highlighted how Italian fans valorise the owner who provides them with success. Paradoxically, they also

resent the fact that they are dependent on this owner. Worse is the fact that the owner does not love the club as much as the fans. This ‘love-hate’ relationship directly impacts on the role of the *ultras*, as well as their approach to governance. Numerato (2015: 4) argued that ‘the relationship between supporters and institutions of “modern” football is dynamic and blurred’. This is particularly apposite in the Italian case as the owners have incorporated leading *ultras* into their patrimonial networks (Doidge 2015). They have provided concessions to sell club merchandise or free tickets to *ultras* groups in return for their compliance. In some cases, *ultras* have been used in power struggles between directors (Scalia 2009). Others, including Berlusconi, buy players as gifts to the fans. The result is that the *ultras* have gained strong legitimacy with the clubs. This led to the former England manager, Fabio Capello, to declare that ‘In Italy the *ultras* are in charge’ (La Gazzetta dello Sport 2009).

The Development of the *Ultras*

The *ultras* are the dominant image of Italian football. They are organised groups of predominantly young male fans. Although a significant number of female *ultras* exist in Italy, they do not dominate in the organising committees (*direttivi*) or among group leaders (*capo*) (Cere 2002). *Ultras* support ‘their’ team with spectacular choreographies of banners, flags, flares and chanting. These features derived from their early development. *Ultras* groups grew out of the supporters clubs in the 1960s. Podaliri and Balestri (1998) distinguished four broad phases of development. The original groups developed in the politically turbulent years of the late 1960s and 1970s. Members took the banners and chants from the political protests into the stadium. By the late 1970s, the *ultras* started to fragment. New groups emerged in the 1980s that were influenced by English hooliganism. These groups of *cani randagi* (stray dogs) preferred to focus on violence, rather than politics. At the same time, many of the older groups also became apolitical. The tragic death of a Genoa fan, Vincenzo Spagnolo, in 1995 signalled a new form of collective mentality, the *Mentalità Ultras*, and this has united disparate groups (Doidge 2015).

Testa and Armstrong (2010) called these new groups *UltraS* to demarcate them from previous incarnations of the *ultras*, suggesting that there is something fundamentally different with these new groups. As the following paragraphs on the historic development of the *ultras* phenomenon reveal, there are many features that continue from previous eras. Whilst they emphasise differences, the similarities are also being utilised by groups to form their collective identity. What is different is that *ultras* of rival groups sometimes work together to protest against state *repressione*.

Despite the newly formed collective identity, differences are central to the *ultras* way of life. De Biasi and Lanfranchi (1997) called this 'the importance of difference'. This was reinforced by Archetti (2001: 154) who argued that 'no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives and contradictions'. Central to this is *campanilismo*, a form of localism. *Campanilismo* literally means the love of the local church's bell-tower. As the most prominent aural and visual symbol, it delineated the local community (Sanga 1996). Football consequently has become 'a form of extended municipalism' (Dal Lago and De Biasi 1994: 72). Football clubs symbolise *campanilismo* and the image of the cities. Significantly for Italy, political identity is also important; the political identity of some *ultras* groups reflects the politics of the city (Doidge 2013; Podaliri and Balestri 1998). The local and political influences become entwined within the identity of the *ultras* groups and these help structure the interactions of fan groups across the nation. Dal Lago (1990) argued that team sports divide participants into friends and foes. The 'extended municipalism' has led to friendships and rivalries extending across the peninsula. Consequently, *ultras* exhibit what Murphy, Williams and Dunning (1990: 90) called 'Bedouin Syndrome' where 'the friend of a friend is a friend; the friend of an enemy is an enemy'. The result is that in the early days of the *ultras*, they had enemies who had longstanding *campanilistic* rivalries with the city (e.g. Vicenza and Verona, Livorno and Pisa), or political foes (e.g. Livorno and Lazio) (Doidge 2015).

The differences intensified in the 1980s. New groups appeared who were focused on violence (Podaliri and Balestri 1998). The growth of right-wing politics in wider Italian society also saw an outlet on the *curve*

(terraces). Although the political banners of the 1970s were disappearing, racism and right-wing slogans increased in certain clubs. *Campanilismo* ensured that the city became a small ‘mother country’ (Podaliri and Balestri 1998: 95). Outsiders were open to be abused. This was prominently seen in relation to teams from the south of the peninsula. Reflecting the anti-Southern rhetoric of new political parties such as the Northern League, *ultras* groups declared that the south was another country.

The *ultras* during this period seemed to confirm various individualisation theses that suggest that society is fragmenting and becoming more individualised. Since the formation of the discipline of sociology, there has been academic interest in the change and development of society. Durkheim (1915) and Tönnies (1887) both identified a shift from community to society or from mechanical to organic solidarity. Sennett (1976) and Habermas (1989) both suggested that individuals were withdrawing from public engagement and this contributed to an individualisation of society. This thesis found political popularity after Putnam (1993, 2000) suggested that this withdrawal from public involvement contributed to a decline in political engagement. Whilst the *ultras* seemed to be fragmenting, and becoming apolitical, it is not automatic that this conforms to these arguments. As mentioned above, some *ultras* groups were still engaged in politics, particularly regionalist and Far Right politics. Moreover, the fact that *ultras* were still coming together regularly to support their team suggests that social groups were still strong. During the 1980s and 1990s, Serie A had the highest attendances in European football, particularly in contrast to English and German football (Doidge 2015). Despite falling attendances in Serie A in the twenty-first century, the *ultras* remain the groups still attending the stadium. They are still engaged with their club, and with any attempts to control them.

It took the tragic death of Vincenzo Spagnolo to stop the divisions magnifying. The *ultras* were publically demonised after the murder. The backlash led to the *ultras* of traditional rivals of Genoa and Sampdoria to organise a meeting of leading *ultras* groups (Ferrari 2008; Stefanini 2009). This signalled a move towards what Maffesoli (1996) called a ‘neo-tribe’. Rather than society becoming more individualised, Maffesoli

(1996) argued that although old political and social groups are fragmenting, new ones are forming. Significantly for the *ultras*, these neo-tribes are forming around consumption and ‘tied by culture, communication, leisure or fashion, to a commodity’ (Maffesoli 1996: 81). Melucci et al. (1989) and Touraine (1981) also argued that new forms of political identity are forming around consumption. No longer are they based on class-based politics, but are often temporary and coalescent around a singular issue. In England, these singular issues were related to economic changes, stadium renovation, and new forms of ownership (King 2003; Millward 2011). In Italy, they were joining around economic changes to football and how the state policed the sport.

Akin to Durkheim (1915), Maffesoli (1996) saw group identity forming from the emotional community of individuals joining together regularly. Through his analysis of the corroboree festivals in Australia, Durkheim (1915) identified how collective practice of the rituals generated a ‘collective effervescence’, an emotional energy that temporarily united the participants. Through these rituals, totemic symbols come to symbolise the group and become revered as sacred objects. The rituals of football enable the regular interaction of football fans and the formation of group identity. The intensity and passion of the *ultras* can be accounted for in the regular congregation of members as they plan choreographies and regularly attend matches.

For Maffesoli (1996), the emotional energy is a collective *puissance*. This can be understood as collective vitality that essentially becomes an end in itself as the group seeks to maintain and preserve its identity.

Thus, at a time when it has become fashionable to lament . . . the end of the social, we must, with common sense and lucidity, remember that the end of a certain form of the social order, and the obvious saturation of the political order, can more than anything leave an opening for the emergence of a *vital instinct*, which is itself far from exhausted. (Maffesoli 1996: 33)

In arguing against the individualisation of society, Maffesoli (1996) suggested that changes in social and political orders can create openings for new social collectives. More importantly, these groups actively seek to preserve their status and identity.

Unlike the exceptional congregation of Durkheim's (1915) collective effervescence, *puissance* is generated 'in the mundane everyday encounters of its members in all the places where chit-chat and conviviality are present' (Maffesoli 1996: 25). Just as Nowell-Smith (1979) argued, football is not simply played over the course of ninety minutes on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. It is played and re-played throughout the week in conversations and media analysis. The mundanity of interactions around football helps generate the emotional bond with a wider collective. Maffesoli (1996) drew on Simmel's (1950) theory of sociability which suggested that individuals come together for the sheer pleasure of having shared interests. For many fans and *ultras*, there is no greater desire than to be with other people who have a common outlook. Sociability is an end in itself; it is mundane. Just as Durkheim (1915) effectively argued that the groups create the totemic symbol as a representative of themselves, and by worshipping the totem they are effectively worshipping themselves, Simmel's (1950) concept of sociability sees fans meeting because they enjoy being with people like themselves.

In his conception of *puissance*, Maffesoli (1996) reiterated the importance of power. Effectively *puissance* is power collectively generated by the group; a power from below. He differentiated this from *pouvoir*, which is 'authority from above'. By creating the *puissance-pouvoir* dichotomy, Maffesoli (1996) did not take into account power within the *ultras* groups themselves or between *ultras* groups. It does not address the different levels of power by outside agents such as football clubs, federations, the government and the police, either. Despite this conception of power resulting in a false dualism, it is useful to think about the impact of power from outside the group. Outside factors have a dramatic influence on the *Mentalità Ultras*. As mentioned earlier, De Biasi and Lanfranchi (1997) stressed 'the importance of difference' for the *ultras* identity. The rituals of football ensure that different symbols represent different groups. This can be club colours, badges and players who symbolise the wider fan collective or the city. It can also be separate *ultras* groups' symbols and banners that represent the smaller collective.

The concept of *pouvoir* is important when addressing the relationship of the *ultras* with the state and the football authorities. Although

individual *ultras* groups conform to Maffesoli's (1996) theory of neo-tribes, the *Mentalità Ultras* is uniting different *ultras* groups from different clubs and overriding traditional differences. In Italy, the *ultras* have united in opposition to the commercial development of football. Under the umbrella 'no to modern football', the *ultras* are vocalising their opposition to what they see as 'modern', commercial football. Opposition under the banner of 'no to modern football' has taken many forms, including protest banners and supporters' strikes. This provides, as Numerato (2015: 7) argued, 'a common vocabulary and shared experiences enhance(ing) the supporters' sense of solidarity and contribut(ing) to the development of tactics of protest'. This was reinforced through the development of the 'Against Modern Football Manifesto' that circulated the Internet forums of various *ultras* groups in the early twenty-first century.¹ Whilst the manifesto was a significant development in the movement, the majority of the protests continued 'traditional' *ultras* forms of protests. This draws on the performative aspects of the *ultras* style of support without entering into dialogue with clubs, federations or government. Ultimately, however, the authorities' *repressione* of *ultras* activities strengthened the collective *Mentalità Ultras*, but this helped shift attention away from issues of governance.

Repressione and the Mentalità Ultras

The authorities have helped to create the image of the *ultras*. Since the 1970s, violence has been a part of some *ultras* repertoire. This has enabled them to be constructed as a 'folk devil' (Marchi 2005). After the 'derby of the dead child' between Roma and Lazio in 2004, the media speculated whether the *ultras* had pre-planned the move to protest against new laws that could have led their clubs to enter administration. Similarly, the head of Rome's police, Achille Serra, stated that he suspected that the violence was premeditated. As Cohen (2002) argued, the moral panic creates a self-perpetuating cycle that necessitates a hard-

¹ <http://www.asromaultras.org/manifesto.html>.

line approach from the police and government. If the *ultras* are a folk devil, then the politicians seek to address this through legislation and the police focus their efforts accordingly. This results in more arrests and issues related to *ultras* and acts as justifications to the law-makers.

Draconian legislation was imposed after the death of a policeman, Filippo Raciti, during a riot between Catania and Palermo *ultras* in 2007. The *Pisanu Law* was imposed in an attempt to clamp down on the excesses of the *ultras*. Additional security barriers were erected around stadiums and new regulations were imposed on purchasing tickets. The rules governing football banning orders, Daspos (*Diffida ad Assistere alle manifestazioni Sportive*) were also expanded. The problem with these new laws was that they were imposed under the *Decreto Legge* (Decree Laws). These laws are permitted in the Constitution to impose emergency legislation. Testa (2013) argued that these laws bypass parliamentary debate and have created an *ad hoc* approach to the problems in the stadium. An AS Roma fan and lawyer, Lorenzo Contucci argued that a thorough debate in parliament would produce a more beneficial result. In a personal interview, he made a similar point about the ‘emotional’, reactive approach to Decree Laws:

In Italy when there is *confusione* you know, when there is an accident in the stadium, after two or three days you have a new law. It is an emotional law and sometimes it is not fair and it is not correct. In Italy the Daspo is done directly by the police and there is no control over it. While in England there is a proposal I think, by the police, and then there is the judge that gives the banning order’ (Lorenzo Contucci, AS Roma and lawyer, personal interview, January 2014).

The authorities also attempted to impose a supporters’ identity card, *la tessera del tifoso*. The idea for the *tessera* was to make it easier to purchase tickets, to control fans through prohibitions to attend sport events (known as *DASPOs* after its Italian acronym) linked to their *tessera* cards, and to allow clubs to market their products. In short, these cards were an Italian version of Margaret Thatcher’s idea to impose ID cards to control football supporters (see contribution by David Webber in this volume). An unintended consequence of the introduction of the *tessera* was to facilitate

the continued unification of the *Mentalità Ultras*. Fans of rival groups put aside their political and local differences to unite in opposition to the card's introduction (Guschwan 2013). The teamwork culminated in a national protest held in Rome. Despite this collaboration, it has not been translated into constructive challenges over governance, but focused on the state and the police.

In an attempt to break the power of the *ultras*, the state has unintentionally helped provide the focus for them to unite as outsiders. As Stott and Reicher (1998) and Stott and Pearson (2007) argued in relation to hooliganism, fans that expect a negative response from the authorities unite to protect themselves. This 'outsider' mentality is also being demonstrated through slogans and banners prominently displayed by *ultras*. The police have become the central focus of the *ultras'* anger. As witnessed after the 'derby of the dead child' between Lazio and Roma in 2004, the fans of both sides united to attack the police. This hostility to the police can be witnessed in 'ACAB syndrome' (Stefanini 2009). The acronym for the English slogan 'All Cops Are Bastards' has become a standard banner amongst many *ultras* groups across Europe. Others include '*libertà per gli ultras*' ('Liberty for the *ultras*') and 'no to modern football', the slogans that appear on T-shirts and graffiti (Doidge 2015; Numerato 2015). The authorities have helped reinforce this approach. In 2008, the derby between Napoli and Roma was preceded by violence. About 2,000 Napoli fans without tickets were permitted to travel to Rome and were met with 'zero tolerance' from the police. The police reinforced their approach by releasing figures stating that 800 of the 2,000 fans had criminal records, including 27 with links to the *Camorra*. At the next match, hundreds of Napoli fans demonstrated their 'outsider' status by sporting T-shirts stating, 'I've got a criminal past' (Hawkey 2008).

The authorities' approach is not just uniting *ultras* that support the same team. As occurred after the 'derby of the dead child', rival fans are uniting and displaying solidarity with one another. As Maffesoli (1996) argued, new solidarity is being formed despite the fragmentation of old identities. This is exacerbated by the perceived persecution of the *ultras*. Not only are the security measures called '*repressione*' but also perceived injustices are reinforcing the animosity felt by *ultras* groups. Nine months after Filippo Raciti was killed in 2007, a Lazio fan was shot and killed by a policeman.

Gabriele Sandri was asleep on the back seat of a car parked in an Autogrill at the edge of a motorway. In the car park alongside, there was a confrontation between some Juventus and Lazio fans. As it resolved itself, a policeman ran towards them, gun drawn and accidentally fired. The bullet passed through the car and killed Sandri. Whereas all games were cancelled after the death of the policeman Raciti, the authorities only cancelled the Lazio match this time. In Bergamo, Atalanta fans attempted to have their game cancelled and started attacking the Perspex security walls that separated the fans from the pitch. *Ultras* of different clubs and different groups were showing solidarity with Sandri and Lazio; they realised that it could have been them accidentally shot by the police. On the anniversary of Sandri's death, Parma fans displayed a banner outside their stadium stating 'a year has passed, but we have not forgotten: justice for Gabriele'. Similar scenes were witnessed in Livorno. On 5 September 2014, seventeen-year-old Davide Bifolco was accidentally shot by a policeman as he passed a roadblock in Napoli (*Il Fatto Quotidiano* 2014). Even though this was not related to a football match, Livorno fans displayed a banner at their match the following week declaring, '05-09-2014 un altro "colpo accidentale" in questo stato criminale' ('05-09-2014 another "accidental shot" in this criminal state'). Livorno *ultras* were clearly showing solidarity with the deceased, whilst reinforcing the culpability of the state.

The unity of the *Mentalità Ultras* was also clearly on show in the 2014 Italian cup Italia final. *Genny'a carogna* was sporting a T-shirt emblazoned with 'Speziale Libero'. Antonino Speziale was one of the *ultras* jailed for the murder of the policeman Raciti. By sporting this T-shirt, *Genny'a carogna* was declaring that he wanted Antonino Speziale to be freed from prison. More importantly, he was also declaring his solidarity with an *ultras* member from Catania, a club separate from his own team of Napoli. 'Speziale Libero' is becoming a trope of the *ultras* that reinforces 'ACAB syndrome' and unites the *ultras* in opposition to the police. Significantly, the slogan of 'Speziale Libero' is being used outside Italy to unite *ultras* from different groups, clubs and leagues. *Ultras* from Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund both displayed banners declaring 'Speziale Libero' (La Repubblica 2014). Just as 'ACAB' has become a symbol uniting *ultras* across Europe, defence of someone in jail for killing a police officer is continuing in the same vein.

The state '*repressione*' has clearly not improved conditions in the Italian game. Since the death of Raciti, there have been several security incidents in Italian stadiums. In addition to the Atalanta fans attacking the stadium after the death of Raciti, the ticketless Napoli fans attending Rome, and the delay of the Italian cup final, there have been other incidents. In particular, Genoa *ultras* disrupted their match with Siena in 2012. Genoa was losing to the Tuscan side 4–0 and the *ultras* thought that the players were not fit to wear the shirt. They started throwing flares on the pitch which led to the match being abandoned. The captain of Genoa, Marco Rossi, went over to negotiate and was ordered to remove his shirt. After discussion with the club's president, the players all removed their shirts. It was only after the intervention of the player Giuseppe Sculli, who allegedly has links to the *Camorra*, that the impasse was resolved. Genoa's president helped reinforce the authority of the *ultras* by dismissing the manager after the match. The Italian approach is confrontational. The state seeks to impose its authority over the *ultras*, who in turn, resist this *repressione*. There is little attempt to engage in a dialogue.

The *ultras* are engaging in the form of protest that has characterised the movement since the 1970s. Whilst this can reinforce feelings of solidarity amongst participants and engender a collective emotional energy, it has not automatically been translated into constructive change. Just as Simmel (1950) noted, sociability can be an end in itself. The continued meeting and engagement with friends means that individuals want the group to continue. Similarly, Maffesoli (1996) suggested that the social aspect of the group leads to a 'vital instinct' that fuels the continued existence of social groups. In terms of the protests themselves, it does not necessarily mean that *ultras* are automatically trying to change the situation; the very continuance of the group is the focus. As Numerato (2015: 13) argued:

The transformative potential of protests can be reinforced through iconic representations, shared language, emotional investments, and collective memory of struggles . . . at the same time, the transformative potential of the opposition initiatives risks being weakened as the protests become ends in themselves

Other Forms of Fandom

The confrontational approach of the *ultras* has minimised the focus on other football fans. As the most established and powerful form of fandom, the *ultras* dominate discussions about the governance of Italian football. Consequently, the issues that they consider to be important are the ones that attract media, government and police attention. In recent years, the various forms of *repressione* have united the *ultras* to challenge the authorities. More often than not this is directed at the police. Issues such as racism are not seen as important in relation to the police and government's approach (Doidge 2014). The 'no to modern football' movement has built some momentum away from the *ultras*; however, this is nurturing a new approach to governance in Italy. Sennett (2012) argued that in learning to overcome divisions in society, individuals and groups need to learn the skills of co-operation. More importantly, individuals and groups should accept differences. Spending time with people unlike ourselves can facilitate this understanding and co-operation. In this way, confrontations can be overcome.

Supporters' Trusts could be a way in which the confrontational approach of the state and the *ultras* is broken down. As Russo (2013) argued, 'it will be necessary to work on the football culture to see fan involvement as "normal", and realise a virtuous model in which the trust movement could be a solution to this crisis'. Clubs, politicians and the police (as well as fans) need to start learning to co-operate, as Sennett (2012) suggested. The idea for Supporters Trusts originated in the UK in the 1990s out of the Independent Supporters' Association movement in response to a financial crisis affecting many clubs, including Plymouth Argyle, Portsmouth, and Northampton Town. Supporters' Trusts are a relatively young movement in Italy. In a short time, a number of trusts have been established, from my Roma and Verona col Cuore at Serie A clubs to smaller clubs such as Taranto, Arezzo, Modena and Venezia. In 2013, Supporters in Campo was initiated to act as an umbrella organisation for Supporters' Trusts in Italy (for a more detailed historical analysis, see the contribution by Croci in this volume). This organisation provided practical and legal support to those establishing trusts.

Significantly, the organisation also lays down its guiding principles to make community involvement central (Doidge 2015). *Campanilismo* can be an asset in these situations as it encourages the pride in the local community.

The challenge for the trust movement in Italy is to sustain a national focus. As witnessed with the *ultras*, shared issues affecting *ultras* across the nation has brought them together to contest the changes in football. King (2003: 184) observed this in relation to supporters' movements elsewhere in Europe when he argued:

While it is possible that fans can be mobilised on a national level for certain critical developments such as the introduction of all-seater stadiums, it is almost impossible to sustain national fan groups beyond a period of crisis.

Groups like *Supporters in Campo* can provide the centralised resources and the emotional space to share information and encouragement to localised trusts. Significantly, the supporters' trust movement did not emerge from the traditional Italian forms of support; they were established through interaction with European fans in similar situations. This pan-European co-operation is vital in maintaining the focus on governance issues at a local level. Potentially European umbrella groups such as Football Supporters Europe and Supporters Direct Europe can provide the space for collaboration and co-operation (the contribution by Croci in this volume provides an in depth discussion of the development of the supporters' trust model in Italian football).

Conclusion

Civic engagement is built on national and local political traditions. The *ultras* reflect the forms of protest that were originally brought into the stadium in the 1960s and 1970s. These positions have become entrenched in the face of government *repressione*. Moreover, supporters in Campo, reflect the new European influence. Fans are engaging in European networks and sharing ideas. The danger is that group identity becomes the

reason and focus of any form of political actions, as Numerato (2015) argued. The problem with the *ultras* is that the *Mentalità Ultras* has become an end in itself. The groups are more focused on maintaining what they consider to be an 'authentic' form of fandom, rather than looking to the wider governance issues that are impacting all fans.

The *Mentalità Ultras* is becoming a self-reverential trope that exemplifies and valorises the *ultras* style of support. Yet, this mentality has been solidified thanks to government *repressione*. Fighting the government and police to maintain their own style of fandom has ensured that other issues impacting football are not considered important. As Contucci and Francesio (2013: 1) argued, 'they [the authorities] are trying to chase the violent people from the stadium. They have chased away everyone but the violent people'. The result is that the *ultras* see themselves as the only valid form of fandom. Co-operation and governance do not enter their idea of ownership. When asking the question, 'whose game is it anyway', the *ultras* already think they own it and want to continue to assert their approach. As Portelli (1993) argued, they have a 'love-hate' relationship with the owners of their club. They welcome the success they bring, but hate being reliant on someone who does not love their club as much as them. Yet, this has never been translated into actual ownership taking. Only with a constructive dialogue, in collaboration with supporters across Europe, can Italian football start to overcome its seemingly inherent state of crisis and begin to build from 'Year Zero'.

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5

Football Supporters' Trusts in Italy: A Horizontal Survey and the Case of Sambenedettese

Oswaldo Croci

Introduction

Football supporters in Italy have yet to become significantly involved in the ownership and governance of professional football clubs. In this respect, Italy lags behind Spain and Germany, where supporters' total or partial ownership of their clubs has long been part of a prevailing model of football organisation, not to speak of some Latin American countries such as Argentina and Uruguay where almost all football clubs have traditionally been owned by their supporters. The Italian experience is primarily based on that of England. Although the very first Italian supporters' organisation modelled after the English experience (Modena Sport Club) dates from 2008, it was only in 2010 that the phenomenon took off and other supporters began to organise

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themselves and seek a voice in the governance of their clubs with some even making timid efforts towards seeking a stake in their ownership. Most of these organisations concern former professional clubs that have gone bankrupt and are currently playing in the lower levels of the Italian football hierarchy.

This chapter is organised in two parts. The first gives a brief, horizontal analysis of supporters' organisations in Italy and draws some preliminary generalisations. The second part is a vertical case study. It examines the efforts of the supporters of Sambenedettese, a club that between 1957 and 1989 played 21 seasons in the second tier of the professional divisions (Serie B) but which since then has repeatedly gone bankrupt. The chapter addresses a number of questions: what triggers supporters to organise? What challenges do they face? Do they have a precise objective concerning ownership and/or governance or do they move forward haphazardly? Research for this chapter has relied mainly on the local press, the web sites of the organisations involved and interviews with members of the executive of two different supporters' organisations: Tifosi Pro-Samb and Noi Samb.¹

Italian Supporters: Laggards but Catching Up Fast

Supporters' involvement in the governance of football clubs has developed differently across Europe. The most advanced example is that of Spain where supporters own at least four professional clubs in the top two professional leagues (Athletic Bilbao, Barcelona, Osasuna, and Real Madrid). In Germany, the participation of supporters in the ownership of clubs is facilitated by a 1999 law that prevents any individual or

¹ I wish to thank Stefano Pagnozzi who works for *Supporters in Campo* and maintains the blog www.infoazionariatopopolarecalcio.blogspot.it. In addition to providing me with valuable suggestions he has also been instrumental in helping me update to 30 March 2016 Table 5.1 in the text. Thanks also go to Riccardo Bertolin of *My Roma* and my fellow Samb supporters Nazzareno Perotti, Guido Barra, Fabrizio Roncarolo and Ennio D'Angelo and Gianni D'Angelo for providing me with inside information about the two Samb supporters' organisations.

company from owning an absolute majority of shares in football clubs. The situation is more complex in England where supporters' participation is more differentiated but still primarily confined to clubs in the lower leagues (Martin 2007).

Supporters in Italy are latecomers, having begun to organise themselves only in the last decade. The reasons for this tardiness and the relatively small number of organisations set up so far have yet to be explored. At the most general level, one could argue that they are related to Italian political culture. As Almond and Verba (1989: 308) concluded in their comparative empirical study of political culture in five Western democracies more than fifty years ago, 'Italians are particularly low in the acknowledgement of the obligation to take an active part in local community affairs, in the sense of competence to join with others in situations of political stress, in their choice of social forms of leisure-time activity, and in their confidence in the social environment'. Things have certainly not improved since then and, on some dimensions at least, may have even worsened. Thus, if Italians continue to exhibit a 'low level of personal subjective efficacy' (Isernia and Di Mauro 2012: 182), they seem to believe even more strongly today than they did in the past that their own political and economic salvation can come only from a 'man of destiny'. As an Italian journalist has recently put it, 'the Man of Destiny, the one who can resolve any problem with his magical charisma is truly an archetype of the Italian psyche' (Gallo 2014). If for some Italians the experience with Mussolini was sufficient to cast doubt on this belief, for the majority of them it was not. Silvio Berlusconi and, more recently, Matteo Renzi have both been hailed as saviours anointed to redeem Italians from all their political and economic troubles. For most Italians, in other words, solutions to their political-economic problems are never in any way linked to their behaviour and hence, there is nothing they can do to solve them. They expect the solution to come from the outside or, better, from above. This is also the case for Italian football supporters who think that if their club does not perform well or has financial problems the solution consists in finding a new owner who is richer or at least willing to spend more money on the club than his predecessors. For them, success always comes from above. They rarely look at it as something over which they might have some control.

In the last decade, however, some groups of supporters have come to question these beliefs and begun acting differently. In almost all cases, the trigger for this change in attitude has been the bankruptcy of their clubs and hence the threat of their disappearance. At the end of March 2016, there were 26 supporters' organisations operating in the top four levels of the football hierarchy in Italy.² Table 5.1 lists the names of the supporters' organisations, the year in which they were set up, the names of their corresponding clubs, the level at which the club currently plays, and, if applicable, the percentage of club shares they own as well as the number of representatives they have on their clubs' administrative board.

As Table 5.1 shows, 17 of all supporters' organisations (corresponding to 65.4 per cent of the total) concern clubs playing in the lower levels of the Italian football hierarchy in the 2015–16 season. More precisely, seven of them were in the professional Lega-Pro and ten in the officially amateur, but in practice semi-professional, Serie D. All the reference clubs of these supporters' organisations have experienced at least one bankruptcy in the last decade, which was the trigger for supporters to organise themselves. Nine supporters' organisations (corresponding to 34.6 per cent of the total) concern clubs playing in the top two professional divisions (five in Serie A and four in Serie B).

Only eight of the 26 supporters' organisations (corresponding to 30.7 per cent of the total) own shares in their corresponding clubs. Among these, however, only Sosteniamolancona has been able to acquire ownership of its club of which it now owns, at least nominally, 98 per cent of the club although it has only two seats on its board. Its case, however, is rather unique. In 2010, following bankruptcy, U.S. Ancona was demoted from Serie B to the amateur Eccellenza league. Its new owner, local entrepreneur Andrea

² This survey examines only the top four levels of the Italian football hierarchy: The professional Serie A, Serie B and Lega Pro, and the officially amateur, but in reality semi-professional, Serie D. The reason for excluding the lower amateur levels (Eccellenza, Promozione, first, second, and third categories) is that supporters' organisations wishing to acquire a role in the management or ownership of their reference clubs face very different challenges depending on the level at which their club plays. In January 2016, for instance, *Il Fasano siamo Noi*, took control of U.S. Città di Fasano, a club playing at the *Promozione* level, after the owner voluntarily relinquished control of the club to the supporters' organisation (Lagalante, 2016). Such voluntary, and free, transfer is simply unimaginable for what concerns clubs playing at the Serie A or even Serie B level.

Table 5.1 Supporters' trusts active in Italy as of 30 March 2016

Name	Year	Club	Level	Shares (%)	Seats on club board
Modena Sport Club	2008	Modena	B	1	
My Roma	2010	Roma	A	0.018	
Orgoglio Amaranto	2010	Arezzo	C	2	1
Venezia United	2010	Venezia	D		
Sosteniamolancona	2010	Ancona	C	98	2
Futuro Rossoblu	2010	Bologna	A		
Toromio	2011	Torino	A		
Verona col cuore	2011	Verona	A		
Lucca Utd.	2011	Lucchese	C	1	
Amici del Rimini	2011	Rimini	C	1	
Taras 706	2012	Taranto	D	5	1
Passione Lecce	2012	Lecce	C		
Nobile Provinciale	2012	Vicenza	B		
SalvaPlace	2012	Piacenza	D		1
Noi Samb	2013	Sambenedettese	D		
Noi siamo il Derthona	2013	Derthona	D		
Solo x l'Ascoli	2013	Ascoli	A		
Cesena per sempre	2013	Cesena	B		
I Biancorossi	2014	Barletta	D		
SEF Torres	2014	Torres	D		
Cosenza nel Cuore	2014	Cosenza	C		
La mia calcio Riccione	2014	Riccione	D		
Solo Fermana	2014	Fermana	D		
Noi siamo il Campobasso	2014	Campobasso	D		
Orgoglio Pratese	2015	Prato	C	5	1
Tifosi per il Brescia	2015	Brescia	B		

Marinelli, decided to work very closely with the then newly founded supporters' organisation *Sosteniamolancona* to which he transferred 2 per cent of the shares and reserved two seats on the board of directors of the club. In December 2015, Marinelli decided to relinquish control of the club and transfer it to *Sosteniamolancona*. He also promised, however, to continue to finance the club as a sponsor for a total of €1.2 million over the next three years and, should the need arise, to return to play a more direct role in the management of the club (Pagnozzi 2015). In conclusion, *Sosteniamolancona* has acquired control of its club without having to make any financial outlay and has basically been given three years to find a way to run the club in a self-sustainable manner.

Other Italian supporters' trusts will certainly learn from this experience but are unlikely to acquire control of their clubs as easily as *Sosteniamolancona* has or might not be as willing as the latter to undertake a similar endeavour. Worth mentioning in this context is the case of *Taras 706*. In July 2015 *Taranto F.C.* president, Domenico Campitiello, transferred the shares he owned in the club (92 per cent) to the supporters' trust for the symbolic sum of €1. *Taras 706*, which already owned 5 per cent of the club, came now to control 97 per cent of it (Palumbo 2015). Unlike *Sosteniamolancona*, however, *Taras 706* did not have the financial resources needed for the club to compete in Serie D (let alone in Lega Pro to which the club at the time was still trying to seek readmission) the following season. Thus, the supporters decided to sell the shares *Taras 706* had just acquired to two minority shareholders who could provide the financial guarantees to ensure that *Taranto F.C.* would be able to compete in Serie D, as it turned out, in the following season (Redazione 2015).

Among the remaining six supporters' trusts only *Orgoglio Pratese* owns 5 per cent of the shares of its club. The other five own only a symbolic amount: 0.018 per cent (*My Roma*), 1 per cent (*Modena Sport Club*, *Lucca Utd.* and *Amici del Rimini*), and 2 per cent (*Orgoglio Amaranto*). For four of these (*My Roma*, *Modena Sport Club*, *Lucca Utd.* and *Amici del Rimini*), moreover, ownership has not yet translated into the right to have representatives on the board of directors of the club. *SalvaPiace*, instead, has a seat on the board of *Piacenza Calcio* even if it does not own any shares of the club. *Taras 706* has been able to

negotiate the right to have at least one seat on the board of directors independently of the number of shares owned. The same applied to Sosteniamolancona that had been granted two seats even before it received a majority ownership of the club.

It should be pointed out that [Table 5.1](#) does not include some failed experiences, each of which deserves a few words. They are Il Mio Gallipoli, Il Mio Potenza, Mantova United, Squadramia, Sogno Cavese, and Mia Terracina. Il Mio Gallipoli was founded in 2010 when its reference club was in Serie D and ceased its activities in 2015. Il Mio Potenza was founded in 2010, following the bankruptcy of Potenza, then in Serie C. Notwithstanding its efforts, the supporters' organisation was unable to save the club, which disbanded after one season in the amateur leagues. Mantova United was also founded in 2010 after its corresponding club, Mantova F.C., then in Serie B, had gone bankrupt and had been relegated to Serie D. The following year, Mantova United acquired 25 per cent of the shares of Mantova F.C. Within one year, disagreements among supporters, linked primarily to the receding of initial enthusiasm and fear of increasing financial obligations, led the organisation to divest its shares and take responsibility instead for the management of the youth teams of Mantova F.C. A year later, however, Mantova United dissolved. The case of Squadramia is different since it did not involve the supporters of a club but a web-based community of soccer lovers wishing to become involved in the management of a football club. They chose Santarcangelo, at the time in Serie D. Basically, this was the Italian replay of an English experience, namely that of MyFootballClub purchasing 75 per cent of the shares of Ebbsfleet Utd. F.C. in January 2008. The only differences were that Squadramia acquired only 10 per cent of Santarcangelo, at the time in Serie D, and that its experience in management was shorter by two years than that of MyFootballClub. It ended, however, for many of the same reasons the most important of which was the declining enthusiasm of the members to spend money in order to participate in the management of a football club.

Also of interest are the cases of Sogno Cavese and Mia Terracina. They were both founded in 2014 as supporters' organisations for Cavese and Terracina, two clubs then playing in Serie D. Having soon become

disillusioned with the prospect of acquiring a saying in the management of those clubs, the supporters decided to form instead their own clubs (Cava United F.C. and A.S.D. Terracina) that had to begin their journey in the 3rd Category, that is, at the bottom of the regional amateur leagues. These two cases can therefore be said to be the Italian replica of the Wimbledon supporters forming A.F.C. Wimbledon after Wimbledon F.C. moved to Milton Keynes and those of Manchester United who opposed the takeover of the club by American businessman Malcom Glazer founding F.C. United of Manchester. It is too early to predict whether or not the relative success the two new English clubs have so far enjoyed will also be replicated in the Italian case. Finally, it should be noted that not all the supporters' organisations listed in [Table 5.1](#) seem to be equally active. Some of them, for instance, have not updated their websites for over one year which suggests that even if they have not yet formally disbanded, they have for all practical purposes become dormant.

This brief horizontal analysis of the phenomenon of supporters' organisations in Italy offers evidence that Italian supporters have, even if with some delay, consciously replicated the English experience.³ The reason why they have looked at the English model is most likely due to the fact that the organisation of Italian football resembles the English one the most: in England, as in Italy, most clubs are owned and controlled by global conglomerates and, at lower levels, by local entrepreneurs, and traditionally there has been little if any direct dialogue between club directors and club supporters concerning the governance of the clubs. Evidence of the conscious replication of the English model is illustrated by reference to the following facts. First, Italian supporters generally refer to their organisations as supporters' trusts even if none of them is legally registered as a trust (*società fiduciaria* in Italian). All of them are instead registered under Italian law as different types of non-profit organisations (*Organizzazioni non lucrative di utilità sociale* in Italian) because of the considerable fiscal benefits these organisations enjoy. More precisely, 18 of them (corresponding to 69.2 per cent of the

³ For an analysis of the English experience in its early years, see Hamil et al. (2000).

total) are *associazioni*, six (or 23.1 per cent of the total) are *cooperative* while the remaining two are a *comitato* and a *fondazione*. Second, Italian supporters have replicated the national structure that exists in England where, in October 2000, eight years after the formation of a pioneering supporters' trust by the fans of Northampton Town (Lomax 2000), a national organisation called Supporters Direct was set up with the task of helping supporters at other clubs to establish similar democratic associations 'to gain influence in the running and ownership of their clubs' (Supporters-Direct, n.d.). In 2013, in fact, a national organisation called *Supporters in Campo* (SINC) was set up 'to promote real democracy in Italian football through the direct participation of supporters to the governance of football and its clubs' as well as 'to foster a cultural change among supporters so as to enable them to go beyond their mere passion for football and begin to exercise a direct, responsible role in it' (SINC 2013–14). Most of the Italian supporters' organisations listed in Table 5.1 above are members of SINC, and SINC is affiliated with Supporters Direct Europe, which was launched in 2007 with the support of UEFA so that other UEFA affiliated football federations could benefit from the English experience and try to replicate its model in their own countries. Third, the episodes of Squadramia and Santarcangelo as well as that of Sogno Cavese and Mia Terracina suggest that Italian supporters have emulated the English experience even in some of its more unusual, or creative if one prefers, cases.

The Italian experience replicates the English model also for some other features. First, the bankruptcy of the club has represented in most cases the trigger that has pushed supporters to organise. Second, almost all Italian supporters' organisations concern clubs playing in the lower professional and semi-professional leagues, where they have been relegated following their bankruptcies. Third, their participation in the governance of their respective clubs is extremely modest and, except in a very few cases, does not involve ownership. Furthermore, only two of the 26 organisations listed in Table 5.1 (Taras 706 and Sosteniamolana) mention in their founding statute that ownership or partial ownership of their reference club is one of the main objectives to be pursued. Six (corresponding to 23 per cent of the total) do not mention ownership at all, while the remaining 18 (corresponding to 69.3 per cent) mention it

only in a kind of ritualistic form – almost all founding statutes use the exact same language, new organisations having borrowed, as it were, the statutes of existing ones – in one of the articles devoted to the mission of the organisation: ‘The objective of [name of the supporters’ organisation] is to create a responsible and democratic delegation of [name of the club] supporters who wish to cooperate with the club’s owners and managers, *also through the purchase of part of its share capital*, in order to promote the growth of the club and, at the same time, acting as careful representative of its members as well as of all supporters’ (emphasis added). The borrowing, as it were, of the statute suggests that most supporters’ organisations might not have devoted much attention to their mission or *raison d’être* but have simply sprung up as a kind of trendy reaction to the troubles their reference clubs were undergoing at the time. On his blog Info Azionariato Popolare Calcio, Stefano Pagnozzi (2014) gave a realistic picture of this situation when he defined Italian supporters’ organisations as ‘associations or cooperatives of fans who have organised themselves as legally recognised entities in order *to set up a constructive dialogue* with their respective football clubs’ [emphasis added]. Indeed, so far at least, only in very few cases have Italian supporters’ organisations been able to achieve much more than mere recognition as legitimate, and hence tolerated more than welcomed, interlocutors by club owners.

The Case of Sambenedettese

Sambenedettese (a.k.a., and henceforth, simply, Samb) was founded in 1923 in San Benedetto del Tronto, at the time a fishing town of some 15,000 people, from the merging of three small local clubs. Three years later, following the construction of a provisional regulation-sized playing field, Samb was admitted to play in the Marche regional league, at the time the fourth tier of the competitions organised by the Italian Football Federation (*Federazione Italiana Gioco Calcio* or F.I.G.C.). In 1948, Samb gained admittance to Serie C and, eight years later, in 1956, was promoted to Serie B. This promotion was a particularly noteworthy accomplishment if one considers that in that year Serie C consisted of

only one national grouping of 18 clubs instead of its usual three regional groupings of 18 clubs each. Samb spent 21 of the next 33 seasons in Serie B experiencing three relegations (1963, 1980, and 1989) and two promotions (1974 and 1981), a remarkable achievement for a town of less than 25,000 inhabitants when first promoted in 1956 and a little more than 40,000 when last relegated in 1989. In 1985, Samb left its old stadium, Fratelli Ballarin, where it had played since 1931, to move to the new Stadio Adriatico, an all-covered and all-seated modern structure modelled after English stadiums that can accommodate up to 25,000 spectators. The roof of the stadium consists of photovoltaic panels which make the structure completely energy self-sufficient. Both stadiums, however, as is common in Italy, are the property of the municipality rather than the club.

Samb's problems began in the 1990s, in conjunction with, although not necessarily because of, the transformation of European football brought about by the increasing involvement of the European Union in its governance and particularly its decision to treat professional football as any other economic activity (Croci 2009; Croci et al. 2011). At the beginning of the 1994–95 season, given its disastrous financial situation, Samb was banned from playing in Lega Pro C1 (Serie C had by then been split into two tiers and re-named Lega Pro C1 and Lega Pro C2) and was relegated to the amateur regional Eccellenza league (at the time, the sixth tier of the Italian football pyramid). At the end of the season, the club won the league but having also gone bankrupt it was condemned to remain in the same league.⁴

With three promotions in five years, Samb climbed its way back to Lega Pro C1 but its financial troubles continued and at the end of the 2005–06 season, it went bankrupt again. This time, however, it avoided demotion thanks to new owners who extinguished all accumulated debts. Not so three years later, when a new bankruptcy spelled demotion to the Eccellenza league again. At the end of the 2012–13 season, Samb won its Serie D grouping thus earning the right to re-join Lega Pro C2.

⁴The bankruptcy was due to frauds committed by the club owner A. Venturato. His trial for bankruptcy fraud lasted until December 2009. He was sentenced to a three-year prison term.

The club, however, went bankrupt another time and instead of being promoted was relegated to the Eccellenza league again. At the end of the 2013–14 season, under new ownership, Samb won promotion to Serie D (the fourth tier of Italian football, following the elimination of the Lega Pro C2 tier), where it currently plays.⁵

The efforts of Samb supporters to establish an organisation capable of playing a role in the management of their club are, of course, related to the many disappointments they have suffered in the last twenty years. The repeated bankruptcies triggered their direct engagement, which they came to regard as a kind of protection against new bankruptcies and support that would help Samb to regain its rightful place in the professional leagues. There are two organisations of Samb supporters. The first, Tifosi Pro-Samb, was set up following the bankruptcy of the club in July 2009. The idea was suggested by a number of supporters in comments to articles written about the plight of Samb by Nazzareno Perotti, a long-time supporter of the club and director of *RivieraOggi*, the major web-based daily in San Benedetto del Tronto. Mr. Perotti coordinated the collection of funds and was acclaimed President of the organisation (Interview 1, 2014). Notwithstanding its success in attracting members and donations (within fifteen months it had 129 members and had collected over €11,000), Tifosi Pro-Samb could be said to resemble, at its inception at least, the traditional organisations of supporters willing to give a financial hand to their clubs in troubled times but not necessarily aspiring to become a shareholder of the club. Indeed, Tifosi Pro-Samb consciously linked its role to that played by fishermen in the early 1950s, when Samb earned its first promotion to Serie B. At the time, the club could be said to be indeed a community-based enterprise. A dozen of local businessmen owned shares of the club, none of them having a majority, and local fishermen (San Benedetto del Tronto was the most important fishing port on the Adriatic) contributed to the financing of Samb by donating a small percentage

⁵ On 10 April 2016 as this chapter was undergoing its last revision, Samb beat Jesina 2–1 at home and gained mathematical certainty of its promotion to Lega Pro for the 2016–17 season.

of their sales at the local wholesale fish market (Interview 1, 2014).⁶ Indeed, from the pages of *RivieraOggi*, Mr. Perotti would periodically remind readers of this golden period in the history of Samb and encourage local businessmen to become involved again but did not emphasise that supporters could or should become central actors (Perotti 2014a). The statute of Tifosi Pro-Samb, moreover, asserts simply that its main objective is ‘to develop and promote the support for Samb’. Its so-called ‘Decalogue’ (ten points that should guide the behaviour of supporters) does point out that since ‘red and blue (the colours of the club) supporters are an integral part of Samb . . . Tifosi Pro-Samb will ask [Samb’s] President(s) to include some representatives of the association on the board of administrators of the club so that they can monitor all sporting, financial, and management decisions of the club’ but it does not mention any option of becoming a shareholder of the club (Tifosi Pro-Samb 2009).

In 2010, the first initiative of Tifosi Pro-Samb was to donate over €8,000 (the sum collected up to that point) to Samb to purchase seats for a section of the stadium which was undergoing renovations. One could argue that this was more a contribution made to the municipality of San Benedetto del Tronto (or the community as a whole) that owns the stadium than to Samb itself. Whichever the case, Samb directors eventually declined the donation explaining that ‘since only Tifosi Pro-Samb had answered the appeal to sponsor the purchase of the seats for all remaining sectors of the stadium’, it was better to decline the only offer received and wait until the whole stadium could have the look it deserves (Interview 1, 2014). It was only after this event, at a general assembly of the association held on 28 April 2011, that Tifosi Pro-Samb decided ‘to prepare the ground for the acquisition of shares in the club, which would allow one of its representatives to sit on the board of directors and thus participate in its decision-making process’ (Tifosi Pro-Samb, 2011). Nothing, however, came out of this decision

⁶The support of the fishermen is also mentioned in a brief video available on YouTube documenting one of the last Samb home games in Serie C against Lecco in 1956: ‘A San Benedetto pesci e pallone’ (In San Benedetto fish and football), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHjC17TE4>, accessed 30 March 2016).

for two reasons: first, the owners were not interested in getting Tifosi Pro-Samb on board; second, there was some hesitation on the part of the members of the association to take on a role which might result in further financial obligations since their representative(s) would only be a minority on the board of directors (Interview 1, 2014). After these events the activities, and hence also the public visibility, of Tifosi Pro-Samb began to wane. At the same time, however, Samb's financial problems became even more severe, which led another group of supporters to form a new organisation.

Noi Samb was founded in June 2013 at a time the club had won its Serie D grouping and earned the right to re-join the Lega-Pro professional league, but a new bankruptcy relegated it instead down to the amateur Eccellenza league. The reasons a new supporters' organisation was founded when one already existed have not been clearly explained by the directors of either of them. It appears, however, that the founders of Noi Samb first approached the President of Tifosi Pro-Samb suggesting the latter merge with them in order to have one single organisation. They allegedly received an assent in principle but before details could be discussed they decided to go alone and form a new and distinct association. The directors of both organisations have mentioned 'philosophical differences' revolving around the concept of supporters and their alleged rights to have a voice in the management of the club. More precisely, Tifosi Pro-Samb is supposedly less sanguine in trying to become involved in the management of the club without first becoming one of its shareholders; whereas, Noi Samb thinks that supporters should have a voice as supporters, even without ownership of shares in the club (Interview 1, 2014 and Interview 2, 2014). Another hypothesis, based on informal talks with some members of Tifosi Pro-Samb, can also be advanced: in relatively small towns, where supporters know each other personally, it is not unusual for personal differences to trump the love for the same club. In Lecce, for instance, Noi Lecce coexisted for three years with two other associations, Lecce in Azione and Salento Giallorosso, before the three agreed to unite and form the current Passione Lecce. In the case of Samb, it would appear that some supporters thought that Mr. Perotti is clearly holding a conflict of interest position as President of Tifosi Pro-Samb. He was, and still is, in fact, the owner and director of a local web-paper whose survival depends

on advertising revenue from local businesses, including the companies owned by past and current Samb's presidents. Hence, some supporters preferred to distinguish themselves and set up another organisation, hoping that the supporters who had adhered to Tifosi Pro-Samb would eventually vote for a merging of the two organisations. This, however, has not happened and only very few supporters have left Tifosi Pro-Samb to join Noi Samb.

Three differences between Tifosi Pro-Samb and Noi Samb are noticeable. First, Noi Samb has from the very beginning modelled itself after other Italian experiences (particularly close has been its relationship with Taras 706) and the European supporters' movement as a whole. Soon after its establishment, for instance, Noi Samb organised a conference in San Benedetto on the theme of 'Supporters' participation in football clubs: a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.' The invited speakers were Ben Shave and Diego Riva, development officer and legal consultant, respectively, of Supporters Direct Europe, Francesco Ghirelli, General Director of Lega Pro, as well as a spokesman of Supporters in campo (the sociologist and journalist Pippo Russo). A representative of Taras 706 (Gianluca Greco) was also invited to the conference. In order to cultivate and promote good relations with the political representatives of the municipality, the mayor of San Benedetto del Tronto, Giovanni Gaspari, was also invited.⁷

Second, Tifosi Pro-Samb asked for donations (these ranged from €2 to €1,000) from supporters who would then become members of the organisation, whereas Noi Samb, in line with most other supporters' organisations in Italy, asks for the payment of a yearly membership fee, of which there are two types: ordinary (€100 to €499) and honorary (€500 or more). Finally, while Tifosi Pro-Samb relied primarily on the pages of *RivieraOggi* and setting up membership recruitment tables at the stadium before home matches to attract supporters, Noi Samb organised a series of dinner-recruitment meetings in various nearby communities. In early 2014, Noi Samb had 388 members, three times

⁷ On the importance of keeping good relations between football clubs and local government authorities, see Perkins (2000).

the number of Tifosi Pro-Samb. The following year, however, the membership declined to 136, which was largely due to the fact that many supporters found it onerous to pay a yearly fee. Tifosi-Pro Samb abandoned its recruitment drive in 2011 and since then it has practically been in hibernation. Yet, only a handful of its members have asked for a refund of their membership fee and joined Noi Samb. This, however, is probably due more to inertia than to the existence of any significant cleavage between the ordinary members of the two organisations (Interview 1, 2014 and Interview 2, 2014).

Noi Samb's aspiration to become a shareholder of the club was first stated, rather cautiously, in the mission statement of the organisation and later confirmed, in much more robust terms, at the end of a meeting of its executive held at the end of June 2014: The association must continue to grow in order to reach its final objective, namely to become able to manage *directly* [emphasis added] the [Samb] club'. A web poll was then conducted. It asked to choose among one of three options concerning the future of the relationship between Noi Samb and the club: a) to become shareholders and then participate in the discussions concerning the budget for the following season; b) to become shareholders and manage the youth sector of Samb (which implied being responsible for its [youth sector] budget as well as for playgrounds' maintenance and rental, away trips, relations with the community, and event organisation; and c) to manage only the youth sector of Samb. This third option basically suggested a continuation of the same activities in which Noi Samb had been engaged since its inception.

The results of the poll were not made public but it appears that option (a) and (b) received little support because at the end of a general assembly held on July 5th, Noi Samb announced that it was ready to acquire only 'some shares' of the club with the number depending 'on the size of the Samb budget for the following season'. Not surprisingly, Noi Samb members were hesitant to buy shares that might become an obligation for additional, and as yet unspecified, financial obligations (Interview 2, 2014 and Noi Samb 2014a). Not much has transpired concerning the ensuing negotiations between Noi Samb and then Samb's owner, Gianni Moneti, but no agreement was reached between the two parties and thus Noi Samb decided to continue with its activities

of managing the youth sector on behalf of Samb. This option, without any doubt, appeared to Noi Samb members as the safest course of action because the youth sector activities for the year 2013–14 had closed with a surplus of about €20,000: expenses were €96,000 and revenues €116,000, of which €88,000 were dues paid by Noi Samb members and €18,000 payments by various sponsors (Noi Samb 2014b).

Two additional things should also be noted. First, in addition to the hesitation of supporters to purchase a minority position in the club, there is also the reluctance of owners to sell shares. Owners/presidents usually work behind the curtains to trade their role as benefactors of the club against privileged consideration for their private business activities from the local municipalities. Hence, they are not overly enthusiastic about welcoming on the board of directors members representing supporters' organisations whose mandate would be to make the management of the club and any other deal connected to it as transparent as possible. In Lucca, for instance, President Bacci, initially at least, refused even to consider the idea of selling shares to Lucca United after some supporters had criticised some of his initiatives as President of Lucchese (Vincenti 2013). A businessman from Turin who in the summer of 2014 was considering purchasing the shares of Samb declared that he would not sell shares to supporters since 'supporters have a role to play which is different from that of owners' (Perotti 2014b). The same is true of Samb new owner Franco Fedeli who, soon after taking over from Gianni Moneti in the summer of 2015, stated, as reported by his son, that he did not intend to sell even 0.5 per cent of the shares to third parties, Noi Samb included (Pisani 2015).

Second, it is not completely clear why some supporters' organisations decide to assume the responsibility of managing the youth teams of their club (Noi Samb is not alone in this respect since Taras 706, Amici del Rimini and Salva Piace do the same, and so did Mantova United, at least for some time). Such an activity is, after all, peripheral at best to the major, stated objective of supporters' organisations, which is to oversee the management of the club to ensure honesty and transparency. One hypothesis to explain this phenomenon is that, given the reluctance of owners to sell even minority positions in the club and given the

hesitation of supporters to become involved in what appears to be a risky, open-ended financial adventure, the transfer of the management of youth teams from the club to the supporters organisation is a kind of middle-ground position – a ‘compromise’ as a member of the Executive of Noi Samb put it (Interview 2, 2014) – acceptable to both owners and supporters of the club. Owners are not opposed to giving up the management of the club’s youth sector since such a transfer relieves them of a responsibility without, at the same time, having to give up its ownership. Supporters, on the other hand, feel that they have become personally active in the life of the club and, perhaps just as important, in an area affecting their community in a more direct and personal manner than the first team does. Youth players, in fact, unlike most players of the first team, tend to be from the local community. The supporters, moreover, are comforted by the knowledge that they are not risking more money than their paid membership fee. In the case of Noi Samb, moreover, there is also a small financial incentive since the agreement between the organisation and the club stipulates that 20 per cent of the revenues from the sales of contracts of youth players would go to Noi Samb. Finally, the directors of the supporters’ organisation also feel that managing the youth sector of a club is a safer way to learn how to manage the whole of the club and thus look at this experience as an intermediate step towards their stated, ultimate objective: taking control of, and managing their club (Interview 2, 2014).

Indeed, in the case of Noi Samb at least (but the same most likely also applies to all other supporters’ organisations), both the executive and some of the members have manifested a deep desire to make a significant contribution to the life of the club while, at the same time, trying to protect themselves from financial risks beyond their control. In addition to the management of the youth sector, Noi Samb has negotiated with the residence of a local high school favourable rates for the lodging and meals of the Under-21 members of the first team. They have also negotiated very advantageous rates (and thus reduced the expenditure of the club) for the use of a ground in a nearby community as a training facility for some of the youth teams, as well as making a deal with a local bus company for the travel of the first team to away matches (Noi Samb 2014a). In the summer of 2014, given the yet precarious financial

situation of the club (then owner Gianni Moneti was still looking for a financial partner), Noi Samb was ready to pay the deposit of €50,000 necessary to meet the deadline for the registration of Samb in Serie D (Noi Samb 2014c). Last, while Samb's owner and President Gianni Moneti was looking for a buyer or a partner, Noi Samb played a kind of screening role of potential candidates and, on one occasion at least (the case of the businessman from Turin mentioned above), it appeared as if the organisation had become if not a veto player certainly a significant voice in the selection of potential buyers.

Conclusions

This chapter has examined Italian supporters' efforts to gain a role in the governance of their football clubs. It has pointed out that such efforts have begun in earnest only in the last few years and have largely followed the English model. In almost all cases, supporters were triggered into action by the financial difficulties or outright bankruptcies of their clubs. With very few exceptions, all Italian supporters' organisations concern clubs currently playing in the lower tiers of the football hierarchy. Their participation in the governance process is extremely modest in all cases and it rarely involves ownership. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how supporters' trusts could acquire a professional club and run it successfully. Italian clubs are not profitable and their ownership makes financial sense only for large conglomerates that can benefit from economic synergies that are simply not available to supporters' trusts.

The chapter has then examined more in depth the case of one club, Sambenedettese, and its two supporters' organisations, Tifosi Pro-Samb and Noi Samb, to draw additional insights and preliminary generalisations that, most likely, apply also to other Italian supporters' organisations. First, in small clubs in the lower leagues, the fact that supporters know each other personally might represent an element of division rather than aggregation. Second, the desire of supporters to become pro-active in the life of the club might not lead to even a minority ownership of the club both because of the reluctance of owners to sell and the hesitation of

supporters to face new, unknown, and beyond-their-control financial risks. Thus, Noi Samb, which has been able to establish a working, although not always smooth, relationship with the owners of the club, has contributed to the activities of the club by managing its youth sector and by taking advantage of personal connections in the community to reduce some of the club expenditures. It has not been able, however, to become part owner of the club and is only occasionally contributing to its governance.

The probabilities that this might change in the near future have become even more remote after the change in the ownership of the club in the summer of 2015 and its promotion to Lega Pro in April 2016. The new owner, Mr. Fedeli, is more financially solid than the previous owner and, consequently, less prone to sell shares in the club let alone get one or more representatives of Noi Samb on the board of directors. The promotion to the professional leagues (Lega Pro) and the consequent increase in the budget required to play at this level will most likely further dissuade Noi Samb supporters from becoming involved in the ownership of the club and, at the same time, reinforce the centralising tendencies of Mr. Fedeli. Indeed, given its drop in membership and consequent decline of revenues, it is more than likely that Noi Samb will have to discontinue running the youth sector. In political terms, one could say that Noi Samb (and this is also the case for a majority of Italian supporters' organisations in general) has not yet been able to have a seat in Parliament let alone the Cabinet. At best, it has managed to become a pressure group to which the government occasionally listen.

The question then becomes: for how long will supporters be willing to operate in this kind of emergency mode which demands both time and resources from them but gives them only very limited voice? Although it is certainly too early to give a definitive answer, two different scenarios can be envisaged. The first is optimistic and would argue that since Italian supporters' trusts have been around only for a very short while one cannot yet expect anything but tentative steps and perhaps some very small accomplishments. It seems, for instance, that the number of supporters' trusts is constantly increasing and so is their survival rate, that club owners are increasingly recognising them as legitimate interlocutors to the point that the dialogue between club and supporters has,

in some clubs at least, been institutionalised, as it were, by the creation of the position of a Supporters Liaison Officer.⁸ The second scenario is more pessimistic and would argue that unless supporters' organisations become able and willing to take the big step of becoming majority owners of their club and find a way to run it in a financially sustainable way – something that at the moment seems highly improbable at least in the professional leagues – they will eventually fade away as the initial enthusiasm of most of their members recedes under the weight of the tasks that the running of any voluntary organisation requires. As the case of Noi Samb shows, the number of supporters willing to tax themselves every year, just in the hope of eventually gaining some voice in the management of their club, rapidly declines and even the 'gladiators' of the organisation, without some concrete achievements, will eventually lose energy and courage. The challenges that the supporters' trust Sosteniamolancona will face in the next three years and whether or not it will be able to overcome them, will undoubtedly shed more light on the future of supporters' trusts in Italy.⁹

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⁸This is, for instance the position taken by Stefano Pagnozzi of Supporters in Campo (Email communication of 2 April 2016).

⁹As this book goes to press (March 2017), a couple of new developments deserve a mention. In October 2016, as a result of economic difficulties, Sosteniamolancona, in a move that replicated the experience of Taras 706 in Taranto, passed control of the club to three new investors who now own 98% of the shares of the club. In San Benedetto del Tronto, Noi Samb seems to have entirely abandoned its ambition to participate in the governance of the club. Its membership has drastically declined and its website only publishes stories on the Samb's matches in the Lega Pro. To conclude, developments in the last year seem to have cast additional pessimism on the prognosis made in March 2016 (when this chapter was last revised) concerning the future of Supporters' Trusts in Italy.

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6

Well Governed? Fan Representation in German Professional Football Clubs

Daniel Ziesche

Good Old Germany? Setting the Scene

Recent years have seen a significant rise of fan groups as stakeholders in European football. Beginning with supporters' trusts in England, organisations such as Supporters Direct and Football Supporters Europe have altered the playing field of social actors in football's big business. In Germany, nation-wide fan initiatives in the 2012–13 season have shown that fans are no longer a 'dull, uncritical mass' (Spiller 2012). Since then, league and football authorities have tried to foster the bonds between fans and the governing bodies by seeking a dialogue on

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an equal footing and including fans in the decision-making process. But how do these developments influence the relationship between the different actors at the club level? Are German clubs – which often serve as a prime example in terms of membership inclusion (cf. Conn 2012; Supporters Direct 2013; Doidge 2014) – really well governed where matters of fan representation are concerned? Which structural changes have recent events brought forth in German top-flight football clubs?

I will start the chapter with an overview on the development of fan politics in German professional football in recent years, a process which led to what might be called a ‘plea’ for good governance regarding fan representation and fan involvement in German football clubs. In its analytical core, I will then follow a two-step analysis. In the first step, I will present the results of a qualitative-empirical review on the status quo of the 36 teams from the 1st and 2nd *Bundesliga* in the 2013–14 season focusing on the involvement of stakeholders (with a special focus on fan representation) in the clubs’ decision-making structures. My aim is to inductively map and characterise existing fan-related structures, to draw conclusions on the existence and quality of a club-fan dialogue and to analyse specific patterns of how clubs involve fans and supporters in decision-making processes. In the second step, I will present eight case studies in more detail which are to a certain degree representative both in terms of the array of structural set-ups and structural flexibility of the club-fan dialogue as well as with regard to the effects for the quality of the dialogue. The studies were exploratory in nature (Yin 1994), bringing together a range of typical and extreme case studies (ibid.). After presenting the findings of each step of the research, I will discuss how far German football structures might serve as an example of good governance with regard to fan representation in professional football clubs. I will finally conclude with suggestions for further research. It is pertinent to note that the data collection timeframe is marked by the end of the 2013–14 season; however, crucial events have been included until the winter break of the 2014–15 season. Events that took place later than February 2015 were not included in this study.

Why Bother? Observations from the German Case

In Germany, the ultras, an originally highly politicised (and ideologised) fan movement from Italy (see more on the Italian *ultra* movement in the contribution by Doidge in this volume), established themselves since the end of the 1990s and gained momentum during the early 2000s. While still upholding some of the political components from the Italian tradition (anti-commercialisation, autonomous organisation of fan curves, anti-police dogma, etc.), the German ultras have followed a predominantly carnival-esque, less ideology-driven interpretation of being *ultra* in comparison to their Italian counterparts¹ (Pilz and Wölki-Schumacher 2010; Ruf 2012).

While *ultra* groups of different clubs share a similar spirit in terms of their attitude towards fandom and football, their connections have been vague and loose, mostly based on notions of respect or disrespect. This changed in late 2012 when the German football league authority (*Deutsche Fußballliga*, DFL) after being put under pressure by the Conference of the Ministers of the Interior pursued a new security concept for stadiums (*Sicheres Stadionerlebnis*,² SSE) and sought the consent of clubs. The plans³ immediately caused unrest in the fan scenes in Germany, leading to what came to be the first nationwide fan campaign: ‘12:12 – *Ohne Stimme keine Stimmung*’ (loosely translates to ‘no voice, no vibes’).⁴ The network ProFans and the interest group Unsere Kurve initiated this

¹ Note that whereas this chapter will use the term *ultra* to refer to these very active fan groups in German football (since this is the denomination they have adopted for themselves), it has different connotations from Italy. German fan groups indeed imported the term *ultra* from Italy, and they used the Italian example in their colourful displays of support in the stands. However, the negative connotations associated to *ultra* groups in Italy (see Doidge contribution to this volume) are not so evident in Germany, even when this chapter explains further ahead that the German authorities felt a need to control supporters and safety inside the grounds.

² Transl. Safe stadium experience.

³ Among others, the most critically received demands by the DFL in the initial version of the concept were the introduction of full body controls in containers, the reduction or refusal of away tickets, and personalised tickets for high risk matches (cf. DFL 2012).

⁴ The numbers ‘12:12’ refer both to the date on which the clubs were supposed to sign the paper, 12th of December 2012, and, in a wider sense, also to the fans themselves as the ‘12th man’ of the team.

campaign. Founded in 2005, the latter group consists of 16 fan groups and represents the more moderate parts of the active fan scene. *ProFans* was established in 2001 out of the former single-issue alliance *Pro 15:30*⁵ and currently consists of members of 48 *ultra* and fan groups from different clubs which sought to utter their voices as one. Both groups (together with several other more or less loose networks and campaigns) held the first independent fan congress in January 2012 and the most recent one in January 2014.

During the 12:12 campaign, ultras at each club ‘ordered’ silence in the stadium on match days during the first 12 minutes and 12 seconds of each game. The impact was astonishing: after the first match days, when a few critical parts of the non-ultra fans had tried to break the silence, the reasons for the protest, that is, the SSE concept, had spread to every single fan in the stadiums and this resulted in a wide solidarity with the ultras on that matter. The spooky silence was broken during the last 12 seconds of the protest which were counted down by the fans and when it reached zero the curve erupted – showing off everything they had to offer visually and audibly for what makes – in their point of view – a great stadium experience. The increased pressure, accompanied by nationwide fan demonstrations, had the DFL revise the paper, which then was agreed on at the envisaged date, on 12 December 2012. Of course, in the eyes of the active fan scene, the ultras at the forefront, the revision of the paper did not go far enough. Still, it became clear that fans cannot be left out of decision-making processes anymore.

As a consequence, football and league authorities joined in a more or less regular debate with fan consortia at a national level and likewise intensified their financial contributions to fan-related projects. Also, directed at clubs, the revised edition of the SSE-paper provided for some adjustments in the licencing order of the DFL with regard to the relationship between clubs and fans, that is, the authorities widened the obligations clubs have to fulfil in the licencing process. These included an increase in the proportion of full-time staff of fan-advisors from one

⁵ As the name indicates, the alliance was concerned with kick-off times and days mostly.

to two per Bundesliga club and the request that each club initiated a dialogue with its fans:

For the fulfilment of the personal and administrative criteria it is necessary that the applicant club [for the licence] declares on a written basis to try its utmost to establish an open, regular and binding dialogue with representatives of the active fan scene. This contains the exchange about how all participants can ensure that basic rules for the exertion of a positive fan culture within and outside of the stadium can be mutually developed and abided by. (DFL 2013a: §5, 11: 12)

In a public hearing in the sport committee of the German *Bundestag* on 21 May 2014, the *Koordinationsstelle Fanprojekte* (KOS, an organisation established in 1993 to supervise and coordinate the social-pedagogical fan projects set up by cities and communes) referred to this passage in their evaluation of the development of club-fan dialogue one year after the amendment of the DFL licencing order. Their evaluation was generally positive, whereby the actual fulfilment of this promise at the club level seemed to be of concern to the KOS. Thus, a recommendation was made to the German Football Association (DFB⁶) and DFL to develop common guidelines to ensure that the commitment to dialogue is actually ‘filled with life’ on site (KOS 2014: 2).

Club Review: Evaluation of *Bundesliga* Clubs with Regard to Fan-Related Structures

In this part of the chapter, I will draw on the evaluation of existing fan-related structures within the 36 competitors in the German 1st and 2nd *Bundesliga* during the 2013–14 season. During the survey, the websites

⁶ *Deutscher Fußballbund*, is the German Football Association. While the DFB is the main football authority in Germany, the DFL is responsible for licencing and marketing, in the 1st and 2nd Bundesliga, and it is a direct subsidiary to *Die Liga Fußballverband* which is the association of all professional football clubs. The relationship between the DFB and *Die Liga* is based on a basic treaty between both associations. All leagues below are supervised by the DFB and its regional associations. Also, the DFB punishes clubs for misbehaviour of fans, regardless of league affiliation.

and statutes of both club and fan structures of each club were examined for information on existing structures, their set-up and size, membership numbers, existing inter-connections, implications for the organisational make-up of the decision-making process in the club and inter-relationships regarding existing, institutionalised dialogues between club and fan-related structures.

Identifying Models of Fan-Related Structures

In an effort to systematically analyse the existing structures of fan-related activities and their inter-relationship, there are different approaches available. The task is complicated by several issues related to the German club system and by overlaps between specific groups within the membership and fan structure where lines cannot be as easily drawn. Still, in an inductive approach, the following attempt shows two possible ways of classifying different types of fan-related structures, first (i) by taking the initiating instance as the guiding factor and second (ii) by identifying the institution's purpose:

i) **By organisational affiliation:**

- a. club-sided (privately funded): fan advice (*Fanbeauftragte, Faninitiative/Fanabteilung*)
- b. fan-sided (privately funded): supporters' clubs (*Fanclubs/Ultras*)
- c. communal-sided/association-sided (privately/publicly funded): fan projects (*Fanprojekte*)

ii) **By purpose:**

- a. Increasing security (solving issues in the fan scene/controlling mechanism/providing assistance on match days, etc.): fan advice (*Fanbeauftragte, Faninitiative/Fanabteilung*)
- b. Increasing influence (dialogue among fans and with club/coordination of actions, etc.): supporters' clubs (*Fanclubs/Ultras*)
- c. Increasing social value (providing educational programmes/workspaces for fans, etc.): fan projects (*Fanprojekte*)

Bringing both aforementioned attempts together, I have inductively identified three different models of alignment of the fan-related structures at German professional football clubs. I suggest the following typology: 1) the standard ‘Three-Pillar’ model; 2) the ‘Club-Fan Hybrid’ model which is in place in four 1st Bundesliga and two 2nd Bundesliga clubs; 3) the ‘Communal-Fan Hybrid’ model being existent at 1st Bundesliga side Borussia Mönchengladbach, only; and 4) the ‘Two-Pillar’ model found at one club from the 1st and four clubs from the 2nd Bundesliga. In the following, these types will be explained in more detail.

Table 6.1 reads from left to right and points out certain characteristics of structures directly or indirectly related to fans. The first pillar represents those structures which are hosted by the club and thereby an integral part of the club structures. These club-sided institutions with a minimum of two full-time positions are demanded by the DFL licensing system and are primarily concerned with answering questions of fans regarding match days, accompanying fans during matches and supporting fans by offering contact persons. According to the recommendations of the DFL, persons to be employed within the club’s fan-support structures should have tight bonds within the fan scene and be respected and long-standing members. The second pillar represents all autonomous, bottom-up structures created by fans themselves such as fan clubs, *ultra* groups and umbrella organisations of fan clubs. These focus on increasing the influence of fans and serve to bind the interests of the fans and to communicate with the club on behalf of the fans. The model is completed by the third pillar: the communal-sided fan projects which are funded by both the league authorities and the city in a joint venture. Their formal foundation is the Social Law Code (SGB) and the National Concept for Sport and Security (NKS). The aim of these projects is to work specifically with problematic parts and individuals of the fan community, to offer educational programmes and guidance with a special focus on anti-racism and anti-violence. Even though each pillar of the structure is set up largely independent from one another, it is the quality of the dialogue among them that determines the efficiency and effectiveness of club-fan relations at each individual club. Usually, the fan-projects (third pillar) serve as a mediator between clubs and fans, because in most cases they are very close to the active fan scene due to their daily work.

Table 6.1 The ‘Three-Pillar’ model of fan-related structures: Standard type

Organisational affiliation		<u>club-sided</u> (top-down)	<u>fan-sided</u> (bottom-up)	<u>communal-sided</u> (top-down)
Purpose		increasing security	increasing influence	increasing social value
Characteristics	Financing	private	(private)	public-private
	Staffing	2 full time positions + extra as needed	voluntary	1 full time position + extra as needed
	Formal foundation	DFL licensing/NKSS ⁱ	-	NKSS/SGB ⁱⁱ VIII
Example		<i>Fanbetreuung, Fanabteilung</i> (fan support)	Supporters clubs, ultras group(s) + umbrella organisation	<i>Fanprojekt</i> (fan project)

Notes:

i) NKSS: *Nationales Konzept Sport und Sicherheit*: National Concept (for) Sport and Security, inaugurated in 1993.

ii) SGB: *Sozialgesetzbuch*: Social Law Code.

Whilst the ‘Three-Pillar’ model (TPM) in its standard configuration exists in 29 of the investigated German professional football clubs, it is just one of the three structured identified by this research, albeit the most common. At some clubs, the third pillar (i.e., the communal-sided structure) does not exist, thus reducing the TPM to two pillars only. According to the SGB and NKSS, this ‘Two-Pillar’ model should not have been possible. However, in reality, it is current practice at four clubs by the end of the 2013–14 season: VfB Stuttgart from the 1st Bundesliga and VfR Aalen, FC Ingolstadt 04, and SV Sandhausen in the 2nd Bundesliga. The lack of the communal-sided pillar is usually due to the denial of the local authority to contribute financially to the building up of a local fan project. As the other structures follow the logic of the standard

TPM, I argue that this model is merely an ‘unfinished’ or ‘crippled’ version of the standard TPM and does not constitute a model of its own.

In contrast to the standard TPM, the two ‘hybrid’ models are mainly characterised by their break away from the autonomous three-way structure. This affects the fan-sided pillar which is either incorporated into the club’s internal structures (Club-Fan Hybrid) or it is incorporated into the communal pillar (Communal-Fan Hybrid). Thus, the autonomy of the fan-sided branch is more or less dissolved in these two models.

The Club-Fan Hybrid model in [Table 6.2](#) is characterised by its incorporation of the fan-sided body into the club’s formal structures. These so-called ‘funding members branches’ (FMBs) vary in their primary purpose, usually serving as a fan interest group and seeking to foster the club’s youth development to form the club’s social value and long-term success in their interest.

The Communal-Fan Hybrid model in [Table 6.3](#) below, found only at Borussia Mönchengladbach, is characterised by its incorporation of the fan-sided body into the communal structures of the fan-project.

The tables are by no means sufficient in their explanatory depth but illustrate the structures which have been identified as being basically evident within the majority of the 36 clubs of the 1st and 2nd *Bundesliga*, except one: FC St. Pauli, which will be discussed later in this chapter. A categorisation and further differentiation is complicated due to several reasons. First, the ‘Club-Fan Hybrid’ structures – such as *Fan- und Förderabteilung* or *Abteilung fördernde Mitglieder* – differ in their respective emphasis of their purposes. Some, most prominently at FC St. Pauli, are set up to directly invest in the club’s youth programmes and, thus, have not only the purpose of increasing the influence of fans but also of increasing the sporting success of the club in the long run. Others, for example at Hamburger SV, are more focused on influencing club politics in the interests of the fans. Second, the German structure of clubs often allows for different types of membership. Thereby, active members are those who are also part of the sports activities in the club, whereas passive members are not. Also, all the members of the club can count more or less as fans of the club while not all fans are necessarily members. In addition, members of fan clubs might not be club members at the same time. This raises the question of whose interests are represented and addressed within the fan-

Table 6.2 The ‘Club-Fan Hybrid’ model of fan-related structures: Hamburger SV, Borussia Dortmund, SG Eintracht Frankfurt, FC Union Berlin and DSC Arminia Bielefeld

Organisational affiliation		club-sided	fan-sided	communal-sided
Purpose		increasing security	increasing influence	increasing social value
Characteristics	Financing	private	private	public-private
	Staffing	2 full time positions + extra as needed	voluntary	1 full time position + extra as needed
	Formal foundation	DFL licensing/NKSS	club statutes/contractual agreement	NKSS/SGB VIII
Example		Fanbetreuung, Fanabteilung (fan advice)	Fan- und Förderabteilung/ Abteilung fördernde Mitglieder (FMB inside club structures).	Fanprojekt (fan project)
			Possibly external (not necessarily members of FMB): Supporters clubs, Ultras group(s)	

related structures. The role of the ultras, for example, differs from case to case. Moreover, the fans who are neither part of any fan-sided structure nor a club member (i.e., the unorganised fans) have to be excluded from the models while assumingly accounting for large numbers within the entire fan scene. Furthermore, their interests might crucially differ from the interests of the active (and especially the more radical) fans, thus, they might in fact represent a ‘silent majority’. Thus, whereas it is acknowledged that the three types identified here may not be perfect due to the

Table 6.3 The 'Communal-Fan Hybrid' model of fan-related structures: Borussia Mönchengladbach

Organisational affiliation		<u>club-sided</u>	<u>fan-sided</u>	<u>communal-sided</u>
Purpose		increasing security	increasing influence	increasing social value
Characteristics	Financing	private	private	public-private
	Staffing	2 full time positions + extra as needed	voluntary	1 full time position + extra as needed
	Formal foundation	DFL licensing/NKSS	-	NKSS/SGB VIII
Example		<i>Fanbetreuung, Fanabteilung</i> (fan advice)	Supporters Clubs, Ultras group(s)	<i>Fanprojekt</i> (fan project)

Notes:

- i) The club calls its arrangement 'Two-Pillar' model

heterogeneity of the fan movement in Germany, it is nevertheless argued that they serve as useful types to structure our analysis.

Additional Findings of the Club Review

A further point of interest concerns the structural set-up of the clubs themselves, as this might affect the possibilities for fan representation, and involvement in a large scale. Out of the 18 clubs playing in the 1st *Bundesliga* in the 2013–14 season, 13 have separated⁷ their 1st squad or the entire

⁷ 'Separation' is used throughout the chapter to describe the process of outsourcing professional elements of the club into capital companies in order to generate more revenues. These entities, however, remain attached to the club. The German term is *Ausgliederung* (lit. transl. to disembodyment or disincorporation).

professional football branches from the club – into different legal entities recognised by German legislation, such as KGaA's, AG's or GmbH's⁸ thus allowing for more independence from the club with regard to management, profit generation and capital investment than would be allowed under the structural set-up of a German traditional club. This means that almost three quarters of the teams competing in the 1st Bundesliga are not, strictly speaking in legal terms, clubs in the traditional (German) understanding⁹ but private companies. This was made possible by the league authorities in 1998. Since then the number of separated capital companies competing in the 1st and 2nd Bundesliga has been constantly growing. The latest case of a successful separation in the 1st Bundesliga is Hamburger SV, where the members decided on 25 May 2014 with a majority of 86.9 per cent the creation of the HSV Fußball AG.¹⁰

In the 2nd Bundesliga, a trend to separate the professional structures of the first team from the rest of the club is equally visible. Out of the 18 clubs, six – or one third – had separated structures by the end of the 2013–14 season.¹¹ The 50+1 rule applies to these structural arrangements as it states that the club – irrespective of the capital shares – has to hold at least 50 per cent of the total votes plus one vote within the Annual General Assembly of shareholders of the separated capital company. This means that control has to remain with the club and, eventually, with its members.¹² While discussion about separation has been popular at almost every professional football club down to the third league at some point in recent years, not everywhere an agreement could be reached between club members and club board interests. Out of the 13 clubs hosting separate

⁸ Without going into further specifics of each specific form, all those allow for the trading of shares and can be seen more or less equivalent to the English PLCs or other forms of joint stock companies.

⁹ The German *Verein* (= association) is characterised by its non-profit/common public interest status and owned by its members.

¹⁰ This in turn compelled the dominating Ultra group 'Chosen Few' to leave the club.

¹¹ With the relegation of DSC Arminia Bielefeld and the promotion of RB Leipzig this number remained the same as RB Leipzig separated its professional branches on December 2nd 2014.

¹² In the case of Bayern München the club holds 75 per cent of the shares and votes, the remainder is split equally among the longstanding partners Adidas AG, Audi AG, and Allianz SE each holding 8.33 per cent (see FC Bayern München 2014). At Borussia Dortmund, the club owns 100 per cent of the votes but merely 5.53 per cent of the shares.

company structures, two are so called *Werksvereine*, namely VfL Wolfsburg and Bayer 04 Leverkusen which have been exempted from the 50+1 rule since the companies behind them have been investing in the club for at least 20 consecutive years before, and which are nowadays 100 per cent owned by the companies Bayer and Volkswagen AG respectively (DFL 2013b, §8, 2, pp. 7–8). Thus, there are only five clubs playing in the 1st Bundesliga which are still in the ‘classic’ organisational set-up of member-owned sport clubs in Germany. These are SC Freiburg, FSV Mainz 05, FC Nürnberg, FC Schalke 04, and VfB Stuttgart.¹³

Tables 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 below provide a complete list of all 36 Bundesliga clubs by the end of the 2013–14 season, explaining the model of fan-related structures at each club and details about their organisational set. The three promoted clubs from 3. Liga have been included, as well.

The standard ‘Three-Pillar’ model is found at 25 clubs participating in the 1st and 2nd Bundesliga (roughly 70 per cent). At all these clubs (Bayer 04 Leverkusen and VfL Wolfsburg excluded), fans (if they are members) are limited to their vote once every year during the general assembly (and possible extraordinary assemblies) and depend on a functional relationship between the different institutions representing their interests. The quality of this relationship varies quite significantly from club to club, though. At the five clubs following the ‘Club-Fan Hybrid’ model, the close interrelation and direct involvement of fans into the club’s structures seems to be a promising approach of involving fans into the decision-making process of the club. To what extent that hybrid structure is really empowering supporters to have a say on how their club is run is difficult to answer with this preliminary and descriptive census of club and fan structures. Further in-depth analysis using a combination of surveys and interviews will be needed. In the next section, however, this chapter makes a first step in this direction in order to examine some positive, negative and ambivalent examples with regard to their club-fan communication and relation in closer detail.

¹³ At Schalke, talks about a possible future separation have been made public in October 2014, but have not been taken further so far, while in Stuttgart, the project of separation, announced for 2015 has been delayed several times, mainly due to the scepticism of club members and the club’s relegation to 2nd Bundesliga in 2016.

Table 6.4 Fan structures in German 1st Bundesliga clubs¹

Club	Dis-incorporated company (Y=13)	Number of full-time employees in club-sided structure	Number of employees in communal-sided fan-structure	Number of official fan clubs and members under fan-sided umbrella organisation	Total number of club members (Y=4)	Derivation from three-pillar model (Y=4)	Additional Remarks
FC Bayern München	Y	7	6	3699/278,576	223,985	N	Communal-sided fan project for both FC Bayern and TSV 1860 München
Borussia Dortmund	Y	5	5	500/25,000	110,000	Y	Hybrid structure: FMB as integral part of club (own branch).
FC Schalke 04	N	2	4	1000/80,000	129,672	N	Ultras and other member-strong groups left fan-sided umbrella organisation
Bayer 04 Leverkusen	Y	2	2	355/25,000	(25,600)	N	SFCV. Talks about separation of a company in October 2014 Club set up as pure LLC Bayer AG single majority shareholder no membership or fan-supporter participation in decision-making process possible
VfL Wolfsburg	Y	3	4	130/9200	(4800)	N	Club set up as pure LLC Volkswagen AG single majority shareholder no membership or fan-/

Borussia Mönchengladbach	Y	3	3	350/6500	60,765	Y	supporter participation in decision-making process possible Hybrid structure: caused by close relationship ("two pillar model") between fan-sided umbrella organisation and the communal-sided fan project
1. FSV Mainz 05	N	3	4	241/n/a	14,000	N	
FC Augsburg	Y	2	1	68/n/a	12,200	N	
TSG 1899 Hoffenheim	Y	2	3	53/3000	5700	N	
Hannover 96	Y	1	4	143/5000	19,500	N	Only one member of staff in club-internal fan advise.
Hertha BSC	Y	3	4	698/n/a	32,000	N	Communal-sided fan project mainly for Hertha BSC and BFC Dynamo Berlin but also for 1. FC Union Berlin and Tennis Borussia Berlin
SV Werder Bremen	Y	6	3	568/12,000	40,400	N	
Eintracht Frankfurt	Y	3	4	540/12,000	27,000	Y	Hybrid structure: FMB as integral part of club (own branch)
SC Freiburg	N	2	4	68/2500	7149	N	
VfB Stuttgart	N	3	-	116/n/a	40,000	N	Crippled TPM: No third pillar in form of communal-sided fan project: City

(continued)

Table 6.4 (continued)

Club	Dis-incorporated company (Y=13)	Number of full-time employees in club-sided structure	Number of employees in communal-sided fan-structure	Number of official fan clubs and members under fan-sided umbrella organisation	Total number of club members	Derivation from three-pillar model (Y=4)	Additional Remarks
Hamburger SV (PO-W)	Y	2	2	800/54,000	71,000	Y	council has repeatedly refused funding Hybrid structure: FMB as integral part of club (own branch). Split of Ultra group Chosen Few" and other fan-sided groups from club after separation of the HSV AG in May 2014
1. FC Nürnberg (R)	N	2,5	3	647/39,000	15,000	N	-
Eintracht Braunschweig (R)	Y	2	3	215/n/a	4250	N	-

Note:

i clubs are listed in the order of the final league table by the end of the 2013–14 season.

Key: (PO-W/L) = Play-Off Won/Lost; (R) = Relegation; (P) = Promotion

Table 6.5 Fan structures in German 2nd Bundesliga clubs¹

Club	Dis- incorporated company (Y=6)	Number of full-time employees in club- sided structure	Number of employees in communal- sided fan- structure	Number of official fan clubs and members under fan- sided umbrella organisation	Total number of club members	Derivation from three- pillar model (Y=3)	Additional Remarks
1. FC Köln (P)	Y	2	4	1352/70,000	70,000	N	
SC Paderborn 07 (P)	N	2	3	39/n/a	10,000	N	
SpVgg Greuther Fürth (PO-L)	Y	1	3	72/3000	2550	N	
1. FC Kaiserslautern	N	3	2	380/20,000	18,700	N	Elaborated structure in fan- sided pillar/close interconnections/ fan assembly
Karlsruher SC	N	2	2	n/a /3200	6000	N	
Fortuna Düsseldorf	N	2	3	n/a /4500	24,000	N	Constant fan work group Fan council
TSV 1860 München	Y	2	6		19,500	N	
FC St. Pauli	N	2	5,5	400/n/a	20,500	Y	Hybrid structure: FMB as integral part of club (own <i>(continued)</i>)

Table 6.5 (continued)

Club	Dis- incorporated company (Y=6)	Number of full-time employees in club- sided structure	Number of employees in communal- sided fan- structure	Number of official fan clubs and members under fan- sided umbrella organisation	Total number of club members	Derivation from three- pillar model (Y=3)	Additional Remarks
1. FC Union Berlin	N	2	4	43/n/a	12,000	Y	branch). Fan advice (usually part of club) as part of fan pro- ject (communal). Hybrid structure: FMB as integral part of club (own branch) Communal-sided fan project mainly for Hertha BSC and BFC Dynamo Berlin but also for 1. FC Union Berlin and Tennis Borussia Berlin

FC Ingolstadt 04	Y	2	-	22/n/a	1100	N	Crippled TPM: No third pillar in form of communal-sided fan project
VfR Aalen	N	2	-	n/a /n/a	1000	N	Crippled TPM: No third pillar in form of communal-sided fan project
SV Sandhausen	N	2	-	23/n/a	950	N	Crippled TPM: No third pillar in form of communal-sided fan project
FSV Frankfurt	Y	2	2	15/n/a	1900	N	
FC Erzgebirge Aue	N	2	2	82/n/a	2800	N	
VfL Bochum	N	2	3	226/n/a	5200	N	
DSC Arminia Bielefeld (PO-L)	Y	2	2	109/n/a	8500	Y	Hybrid structure: FMB as integral part of club (own branch).
SG Dynamo Dresden (R)	N	2	6	174/n/a	15,000	N	Fan charter between club and fans
Energie Cottbus (R)	N	2	3	61/n/a	1871	N	

Note

i clubs are listed in the order of the final league table by the end of the 2013–14 season.

Table 6.6 Promoted teams from 3. Liga by the end of the 2013–14 season

1. FC Heidenheim	N	2	-	16/n/a	1900	N	Crippled TPM:: No third pillar in form of communal-sided fan project
RB Leipzig	Y	2	6	18/n/a	300	N	Special case: only active members (quasi LLC-structure); communal-sided fan project working with fans of BSG Chemie Leipzig, 1. FC Lokomotive Leipzig, RB Leipzig, SG Leipzig Leutzsch, Roter Stern Leipzig
Darmstadt 98 (PO-W)	N	2	2	25/n/a	1300	Y	Hybrid structure: FMB as integral part of club (own branch)

Key: (PO-W/L) = Play-Off Won/Lost; (R) = Relegation; (P) = Promotion

Case studies: Evaluation of the Quality of the Relationship Between Clubs and Fans

In a second step of analysis, I present eight cases, five from the 1st and three from the 2nd Bundesliga. These have been selected for further investigation taking into account structural specifics which might affect quality of the relationship between club and fans particularly. The cases presented here have been selected in order to get an impression of the variety of club-fan relationships. The cases presented here represent both derivations from the ‘Three-Pillar’ model (TPM) and best-practice, worst-practice and ‘ordinary-practice’ examples. In the following, I present five cases which follow the TPM, and three cases which are derivated from the TPM (Table 6.7 above).

1st Bundesliga Cases in Detail

SG Eintracht Frankfurt (Club-Fan Hybrid)

In December 2000, fans of Eintracht Frankfurt founded the *Fan- und Förderabteilung* (a founding members branch, FMB structure) as the 13th branch of Eintracht Frankfurt. The branch has about 12,000 members and is the largest within the club. While every branch sends one delegate to the club’s council, the actual delegate of the FMB at Frankfurt’s council

Table 6.7 Overview of case studies

Club	League	Structure
SG Eintracht Frankfurt	1st Bundesliga	Club-Fan Hybrid
Hannover 96	1st Bundesliga	TPM
FSV Mainz 05	1st Bundesliga	TPM
Schalke 04	1st Bundesliga	TPM
VfB Stuttgart	1st Bundesliga	TPM (crippled)
1. FC Union Berlin	2nd Bundesliga	Club-Fan Hybrid
SG Dynamo Dresden	2nd Bundesliga	TPM
FC St. Pauli	2nd Bundesliga	Club-Fan Hybrid

has been appointed as a club's vice-chairperson, and his position on the council is thereby represented by an acting delegate of the FMB.¹⁴ Eintracht Frankfurt stands exemplarily for the clubs which have a FMB. As mentioned before, these structures are different from the TPM outlined above as fan-sided and club-sided structures intermingle and create a fourth, hybrid category – both in terms of initiating instance and purpose (see Table 6.2 above). This potentially allows for a more direct and regular influence of fans and members on the decision-making processes of the club. In addition, critiques might be raised that connections between the club and fans are too close on a structural level, with the result that fan interests might not be represented to a larger or even full extent anymore.

Hannover 96 (TPM)

The club somewhat represents a prime example of a dysfunctional TPM-relationship between the club and supporters. The events at Hannover 96 can only be understood by taking into account the personality of its president Martin Kind, a successful German entrepreneur and known public adversary of the 50+1 rule. Between him and the active fan scene, a conflict developed which eventually, in August 2014, made the ultras stop supporting the first team and instead kept on supporting the second team three leagues below. The steady crossings of the line by the ultras – mainly by use of pyrotechnics – and their opposition to President Kind, paired with

¹⁴ Cf. <http://fanabteilung.de/cms/pages/ueber-die-fufa.php>.

the consistent unwillingness on Kind's side to enter dialogue, had already created an atmosphere of non-communication in the years before (Claas 2014). In April 2013, the *Rote Kurve Supporters Club*, the umbrella organisation of Hannover 96's fan clubs that had until then been directly attached to the club, declared its dissolution by the end of the year because of a discord about different understandings of their role and the missing basis for a future dialogue (Rote Kurve Supporters Club 2013). From January 2014, it continued independently as the interest group *IG Rote Kurve Supporters Club*. When the problems relating to both the pricing and extension of season tickets for the *Nordkurve* (standing area of the active fan scene) were finally solved during the summer break in mid-2014, the ultras had already made an announcement to support the second team in the following 2014/15 season. Also, in July 2014 the *IG Rote Kurve* declared that it would no longer organise away trips for the fan scene. Hannover 96 has separated its professional football branch and it is expected that Kind together with a group of investors will buy the company in 2018 after the 20-year period of his continuous financial engagement in the club will have been attained.

FSV Mainz 05 (TPM)

At Mainz, the TPM is followed and the involved actors seem to have established a positive and constructive dialogue between fan-sided, club-sided, and communal-sided structures. The overarching instance for this dialogue is *Supporters Mainz e. V.*, the umbrella organisation for the active fan scene. In addition to co-organising logistical challenges for away games such as ticket sales and trains, in cooperation with the club, the association meets club officials, fan advisors, and the fan project on a regular basis to promote fan interests, to gain access to infrastructure, to coordinate actions, and, if necessary, to clear up irritation.¹⁵ This seemingly positive dialogue has not had any positive effects on active representation of fan representatives within the club's internal decision-making structures yet, though. Also, the strong connection between the fan-sided umbrella organisation and the club might

¹⁵ Cf. <http://www.supporters-mainz.de/supporters-mainz-e-v/>.

hold future problems in terms of a pluralistic representation of the active scene's interests, for example, when the allocation of away tickets is concerned. Examples from other clubs (e.g., see Schalke below) show that particularly *ultra* groups tend to be highly critical of 'too close' bonds between the club and the fan-sided umbrella organisation because they feel their positions being underrepresented. At the time of the research, though, the situation at Mainz seemed to be stable and comparably free of conflicts.

FC Schalke 04 (TPM)

While Schalke can serve as a positive example with regard to the integration of fans into the organs of the club additionally to following a TPM, the situation concerning the club-fan dialogue is ambivalent. On the one hand, a board member of the fan-sided umbrella organisation *Schalcker Fan-Club-Verband* (SFCV) has a permanent seat on the supervisory board of the club, which might be an indication of a 'good governance' practice regarding stakeholder representation. On the other hand, in 2013 the *Ultras Gelsenkirchen* and later the Supporters Club as well as the *Schalcker Fan-Initiative* (all strong in membership numbers) left the SFCV after its merger with the club-sided *Fanabteilung* because they did not deem fan interests properly represented anymore. A very typical example of social activism dynamics, whereby co-optation into the organic structures of the organisation (club in this case) is resisted and seen with suspicion by some of the external pressure groups (fans in this case). This opposition towards a '*Gleichschaltung*' of fan-sided and club-sided structures is quite prominent as it is seen to hinder a pluralistic representation of fan-interests, particularly by members of the active fan scene (Redemann 2013). While the media have repeatedly spread rumours about a possible separation of a Schalke AG from the club in recent years, the club itself has denied such plans on various occasions (Redemann 2014; Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung 2014).

VfB Stuttgart (TPM, Crippled)

By initiative of the club's board, VfB Stuttgart has operated a fan committee since 2001. After a first re-structuring, recent improvements have

been made to further alleviate the business of the committee and to legitimate and specify its areas of work. Thus, the committee now works with official terms of reference and rules of operation. Furthermore, in 2012, representatives of the fan committee were democratically elected for the first time (VfB Stuttgart 2014). The mentioned terms of reference define the tasks and purpose of the committee and, on close scrutiny, it reveals that the defined functions do not exceed a consultative status. Explicitly, the rules of operations state: ‘The fan committee advises the board in fan-related matters and acts as a binding element between fan groups and the board’ (ibid.) Thus, the ‘committee’ does not really have a formal and decision-making say in the current operations of the club. However, the terms of reference formally institutionalise the ‘establishment of an ongoing dialogue based on partnership between the club’s board and the whole fan base’ (ibid.). The obligation to respect this aim seems to be rather one-sided, though, as current issues at VfB Stuttgart show. In recent years, fans more than once protested sharply as they feel overlooked in the communication process (Näher 2013). In addition to repeated offerings of the football authorities and even the clubs, as of today, there is no communal-sided fan-project in Stuttgart. While this is not unusual particularly with smaller clubs (and cities) in the 2nd Bundesliga, this is unique for the 1st Bundesliga. In Stuttgart’s case, in addition to pressure being raised by both fans and clubs of the city’s major teams, the reason for this development is the unwillingness of the majority of the city council, to invest an additional €150,000 to the funding by the DFB and the federal state (Rothfuss 2013).

2nd Bundesliga Cases in Detail

FC Union Berlin (Club-Fan Hybrid)

For quite some time during the negotiations for the aforementioned NKSS, Union Berlin announced to refuse to sign the concept. The club referred to the special and close relationship between club and fans at Union Berlin as the reason for the refusal and therefore deemed the concept unfit to meet the existing problems (Union Berlin 2012). Union

Berlin is one of the clubs in the 2nd Bundesliga which follow the ‘Club-Fan Hybrid’ model with the *Fan- und Mitgliederabteilung* (a FMB) being an integral part of the club. The good relationship between the club and its fans became visible during the refurbishment of the club’s stadium which was largely made possible through voluntary contributions by the fans (Horeni 2009). Also, the mutual understanding between club and fans has led to a significant reduction of the police force during home games.

SG Dynamo Dresden (TPM)

At Dresden, club and fans have consensuated a fan charter. This charter is unique in German professional football and states a ‘code of conduct’ between fans and club negotiated by representatives of both parties. It contains and defines far-reaching responsibilities and commitments of the club and fans concerning matters of fan interests such as rules and regulations for the fan cultural development, obligations of ‘keeping the originality of football’, cooperation in the preparation for and during away games, and other areas of fan-related activities (Dynamo Dresden 2014). The charter was first formulated in 2008 and revised in 2014. While other clubs have already announced similar initiatives (e.g., 1. FC Heidenheim), Dynamo remains the only German club that has already discussed and introduced some sort of formal agreement on club-fan-related issues. Of course, as with every charter, the success depends largely on the level of commitment to the agreement of both sides. None of the points listed in the charter is legally binding; nevertheless, both sides have measures to ensure compliance. While in the eyes of the media the fan charter at Dynamo is portrayed as a failure,¹⁶ it can still be regarded as a practice of ‘good governance’ at a club as far as fan involvement and fan-related issues are given serious attention.

¹⁶ Fans of Dynamo Dresden bear the (mass media) stigma of being notorious for their violent and rule-breaking appearances, particularly during away games. This culminated in the exclusion from the German Cup for the 2013–2014 season. As a matter of fact, the club is constantly financially prosecuted by the DFB for transgressions of its fans.

FC St. Pauli (Club-Fan Hybrid)

As mentioned before, this is a *sui-generis* club with a very special relationship with its fans. It does not fit in any of the three models outlined above. The structural set-up at the club represents the logical development of the TPM if the idea of putting fan and member interests at the centre of attention is to be consequently followed. The club-sided fan advice is part of the communal fan project and not – as usually the case with the first pillar – part of the club's structures. At the same time, the club hosts an FMB (the *Abteilung fördernde Mitglieder*), as an own department whose focus lies especially in funding and further developing the youth branches. Also, the FMB has far-reaching financial autonomy and can invest directly according to its own interests, first and foremost in the club's youth development programmes. Thus, the model at St. Pauli theoretically provides for maximum influence of the fans in the decision-making and day-to-day management of the club, whilst maintaining a maximum of autonomy in relation to the self-organisation of fans at the same time. Thus, the trade-off often faced by fans – that is, losing autonomy while being co-opted to gain influence in the club is circumvented by this structure, where FC St. Pauli has transferred its powers to make decisions in fan-related issues to the communal-sided fan project, where fans and local authorities are central, but not the club. The idea behind this is the potential for a stronger self-regulation of the fan scene because the bonds between communal-sided and fan-sided structures (particularly the active fan scene) are generally considered to be closer. Eventually, this model should serve the self-interest of both the club and fans if the communication between the club and fans works at a viable and high quality level. In how far this promising alignment of structures proves to fulfil these expectations needs to be investigated in further detail by an in-depth analysis of the club.

Summary of the Cases Analysed

If there is such a thing as a 'German model' in terms of the structural set-up of fan-related bodies in and around professional football clubs, it

would be the TPM. Derivations from this structure are highly common as well, though, particularly regarding the ‘Club-Fan Hybrid’ model. With regard to the question the chapter sought to explore, only a few (and probably little surprising) general observations can be made. A far-reaching, formal implementation of fan-sided structures into the decision-making process in the wake of the NKSS and the reformulated DFL licensing order could not be identified at any of the clubs – even the fan committee at VfB Stuttgart is not part of this process, as the chapter has pointed out. For all other clubs in Germany’s 1st and 2nd *Bundesliga* there are only a few examples where structures exist to include members of fan-related institutions in the decision-making process at the club level, namely the five clubs which follow the ‘Club-Fan Hybrid’ model. Whether there is an actual influence of fans on the decision-making process and whether this is a best practice example of ‘good governance’ cannot be answered here. An involvement of the communal-sided structures into these processes is as matter of principle with regard to the independent set-up of these structures generally envisaged, however, as in the case of FC St. Pauli a merger of communal- and club-sided structures seems to be technically (and practically) possible. A further and deeper case-to-case investigation seems to be advisable, since, as the chapter has shown, there are positive (VfB Stuttgart, Eintracht Frankfurt, FSV Mainz 05 in the 1st Bundesliga), negative (Hannover 96), and some ambivalent (Schalke 04) examples.

While the basis for a functional dialogue is given – in terms of the existing structures representing different aspects of fan-related activities – the actual setting up of a living and trustworthy dialogue between all actors is the true obstacle to overcome. Indeed, at some clubs, the relationship between the club-sided fan structures (*Fanabteilung/Faninitiative*), and the fan-sided structures of the umbrella organisation and its members can only be described as dysfunctional or problematic, mainly because of different stances with regard to the appointment of roles between club and fans. This different understanding of roles and self-conception allows for a pluralistic line-up of fan-related structures and is the reason why Ultra groups at many clubs keep a critical distance to the co-opted club-sided fan structures because they see their own independence and interests affected by overly tight bonds between the club and the fan representatives

that have been co-opted by the club. In addition, fan interests might sometimes be of a peculiar nature and, of course, the question at the basis is: why should the club involve the active scene with its sometimes off-the-chart demands in its internal decision-making process? The members of the clubs – particularly the ones voting, that is, the ones being present at the annual assembly – are not necessarily part of the fan active scene in their majority. However, at every club a qualified majority (two-thirds) is needed to change the organisational structure. Thus, convincing the other members of the usefulness of, for example, a fan committee seems to be the hardest task ahead for the most active fans – if this is an endeavour they deem worth undertaking at all.

Discussion: The German Case – a Good Governance Scenario?

For at least the past two decades, the term ‘governance’ and its concepts have been subject to extensive academic debates. The main critique brought forward is that the term is too elusive to bear a clear meaning or specific theoretical framework, mainly because of its wide usage within different academic fields. Also, the analytical depth is doubted, as in its clearest and non-normative meaning, ‘governance’ simply serves to describe a specific alignment of structures and their ‘steering modes’. Regarding its normative interpretation – ‘good governance’ – the confusion is even greater. What should ‘good’ mean in that specific sense? And by what standards is the governance of an institution sanctioned with the de ‘greengood’? For the area of sport politics, various attempts have been made to apply the concept on different levels (Ronge 2006), particularly regarding football (Geeraert et al. 2013; Hamil et al. 2010). The AGGIS-group has delivered some examples for usage of the concept and its application to international sport associations (Alm 2013).

Throughout this chapter, the normative governance approach has been followed, perceiving ‘good governance’ as a matter of ‘best practice’ in its plainest sense. ‘Good governance’ thereby includes transparency in decision-making (with regard to by whom, on which matter, and with what outcome a decision has been made), transparency in communicating

internal procedures, transparency in the allocation of positions within the structures, and, finally, a transparent and honest involvement of all stakeholders in communication and decision-making processes. In terms of fan representation, this aspiration should include more than just one vote per member during the annual general assembly or the delegation of a fan representative, given the fact that the fans of club represent the largest group of stakeholders in terms of actual numbers.

The six clubs following the 'Club-Fan Hybrid' model and also the special case of FC St. Pauli seem to have paved the way for an active participation and representation of fan interests in the club's decision-making process. Being represented within the club structures allows for full participation during elections, nominating delegates and being part of the club's internal processes on a day-to-day basis. However, the advantages presumably work out to their full potential only if the club does not separate its professional team to form an incorporated commercial company. This is the case with Borussia Dortmund, Eintracht Frankfurt, Hamburger SV, and DSC Arminia Bielefeld. In how far the FMB actually helps fans and enables fans to influence the matters of the club in their interest in these cases remains doubtful. Promising attempts at strengthening the dialogue and creating a platform for mutual understanding in addition to structural inclusion have been undertaken at several Bundesliga clubs, particularly in the 2nd league. Concerning the demands of increasing transparency and taking the dialogue between fans and club seriously, these attempts seem promising. Again, it is left to further research to evaluate how far these attempts actually bear fruit.

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7

C.A. Osasuna: Identity, Ownership and Governance in Spanish Club Football

Jim O'Brien

Introduction

The tradition of member or *socio*-owned clubs in Spain is often lauded as an accountable, democratic model which maintains direct connection between fans, club, and community. The elite clubs of the major European leagues reflect the inequality and dissonance between themselves and the vast majority of other clubs, which struggle to compete and survive in the face of the marketing power of an increasingly global fan base. Whilst the elite is buttressed by debt, billionaire backers and the sale of broadcasting rights to enhance the traditional constituents of club support, the *socio* model is frequently projected as a panacea or alternative model for clubs on the brink of bankruptcy and ruin. Supporter- or community-owned clubs suggest a return to a 'grassroots'

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approach, more democratic in establishing or re-establishing an organic link between the supporters and the governance of a club.

In the Spanish context, four clubs maintain the tradition of *socio* ownership, in which the President and other major offices are democratically elected, and a cluster of *peñas*, or members' clubs act as focal points of the club's culture and tradition at local, regional, national, and international levels (Wagg 1995: 130). Three of these clubs, Real Madrid, FC Barcelona, and Athletic Bilbao function as huge national and global institutions, with significant economic, political, and cultural power whilst adhering to the principles and public relations benefits derived from the tradition of member ownership. This study focuses on C.A. Osasuna,¹ the least well known of this quartet. Founded in 1920, and based at the 20,000 capacity *El Sadar* Stadium in Pamplona, *los rojillos*² present an insight into a critical and contemporary assessment of the *socio* model in the Spanish lexicon. The fact that the club has been able to sustain this folkloric tradition throughout enormous changes both within Spanish football itself and in the wider political domain gives it significant appeal in respect of assessing whether it would be possible to apply its distinctive *modus operandi* to clubs of similar stature in other European leagues.

The chapter has four main elements. First, it considers C.A. Osasuna as the custodian of regional and provincial identity. Since its foundation in 1920, it has developed as a unifying force, acting as a catalyst to bring the diverse historical, political, linguistic, and cultural aspects of society together in Navarre. In doing so, it embellishes the juxtaposition of Basque, Navarese, and Spanish sensibilities. Football has been a seminal anchor in fostering a specific feeling of ethnicity and identity, so that from the outset the club has represented the province of Navarre, and not merely its major city, Pamplona. Second, it examines the oscillating centre-regional tensions which impacted on the club during Spain's democratic transition in the late 1970s (Encarnación 2008: 170).

¹ C.A. Osasuna Club Atlético Osasuna: Osasuna is the Basque word for health'; the name thus reflects both Basque influences in the club's heritage and the late nineteenth century interest in health and physical education in Pamplona and Navarre.

² *Los rojillos* (also *los osasunistas*) are nicknames given to the club by its supporters.

Since then it has been a stable vortex of cultural autonomy within the escalating demands for Basque separatism and independence which have sought to incorporate Navarre as one of the traditional Basque homelands, in opposition to the province's special history and status within the history of the evolution of the Spanish state³ (Vincent 2010: 220–221). Third, the historical and contemporary governance of the club is evaluated to consider the development of the *socio* model as the distinctive factor shaping and framing the club's identity, with particular focus on the post-millennium period. In recent years, the club has held a higher profile and has come under increasing scrutiny for reasons both on and off the field (Zusa, personal communication 2014). Last, the chapter looks critically at the viability and sustainability of C.A. Osasuna as a member-owned club, notwithstanding the rhetoric and romantic idealism of folklore and history which have been tarnished by the market realities of contemporary Spanish football. For *los rojillos* the passion, loyalty and dedication of its fans contrast starkly with the debt and financial irregularities which recently enshrouded the club as it languished in the hinterland of the Spanish second division, as evidenced by the concluding synopsis of the derby match against Deportivo Alavés in September 2014. The subsequent failure to achieve promotion back to *La Liga* at the end of season 2014–15 was overshadowed by a plethora of match fixing scandals prior to the start of season 2015–16. The miraculous end of season and last day survivals which defined the club's latter years in the top flight were placed under severe scrutiny in a blaze of incriminatory press headlines engulfing C.A. Osasuna and other clubs. These allegations of bribery and corruption not only damaged the integrity and reputation of Spanish football itself; they also tarnished the image and recent successes of the club, and raised fundamental questions as to the viability of the *socio* model of ownership, the stench of financial malpractice and scandal besmirching its

³ *The Statute of Autonomy*, December 1978, provided the constitutional basis for devolved political power to the historic Basque Provinces. The position of Navarre was contested, with the Referendum of 25 October 1979 affirming the province's distinctive autonomy, drawing on *los fueros* (see footnote 4) to legitimise this. The status of Navarre has been a source of political division ever since.

cherished ideals and values. In its consideration of these themes, the chapter presents an analysis of the topical themes of governance, ownership, and identity through the distinctive lens of a club which has succeeded in carving a special niche within the rich tapestry of Spanish club football.

C.A. Osasuna: Football and Identity in Pamplona and Navarra

'Navarre's autonomy was established as a natural extension of its old statutory rights, the so called *fueros* but its proximity to and cultural bonds with the Basque Country are a threat to its separate identity' (Lawlor and Rigby 1998: 37).

C.A. Osasuna perpetuates a sense of its own history, intricately interwoven with the political histories of both Pamplona and Navarre (Crow 2008: 82–84). The province has a distinctive cultural history within the dichotomy of the Spanish state (Junco and Alvarez 2003: 98). Its retention of the medieval customs and practice of *los fueros*⁴ (Tremlett 2012: 301) throughout its turbulent history has enabled it to maintain a significant degree of autonomy in the face of the centralising forces of Madrid, even under the structures of Francoism (Cazorla Sanchez 2014: 50–58). This tradition of autonomy has also enabled it to resist and reject attempts at incorporation into the Basque Country as one of the contested homelands of Basque nationhood (Heyward 1995: 143–144). Consequently, although Navarese society reflects historic and contemporary cleavages based on language, geography, and ideology, and a demography reflecting an urban-rural split, the sense of a cohesive identity and cultural continuity has remained intact throughout the political structures and schisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries embracing monarchy, republic, civil war, dictatorship, and democracy (Vincent 2010: 273). The traditional capacity of Navarre's

⁴ *Los fueros* refer to the medieval customs of self-rule. They are used in Navarre to define self-governance and independence. They give the province its distinctive status in the Spanish state.

legislature to raise customs duties and revenue, still provides it with enhanced powers in certain areas, in spite of the evolving nature of devolved financial power within Spain's autonomous communities (a feature shared with the Basque Country), providing a secure lever of independence from Madrid. These economic and political factors are fused with the tradition of conservative Catholicism, most notably in the celebration of the religious ritualism and symbolism of San Fermín to fashion the defining iconographic characteristics of Navarre's ethnicity (Caspistegui 2012b: 316; Tremlett 2012: 416).

Within this milieu of provincial autonomy, football became gradually embedded as a sporting and cultural activity from the late nineteenth century onwards. Since the club emerged during the 1920s,⁵ C.A. Osasuna has reinforced these historical and cultural matrices to construct a distinctive place in the representation of identity in Navarre (Burns 2012: 33). The club was both an agent and symbol of late modernity in the second wave of football's evolution into a mass spectator sport in the 1920s and 1930s,⁶ thereby expanding the game's compass after its nascent genesis in Bilbao, Barcelona, and Madrid at the end of the nineteenth century (Ball 2011: 43).

The club's development in these decades was underscored by the gradual shift from tradition to modernity in sporting and non-sporting contexts, a trend which was most potently expressed in Pamplona itself (Hooper 2007: 221). The city experienced a period of late industrialisation and urbanisation in the 1920s, followed by subsequent population growth during the 1940s and 1950s, stemming from post-civil war patterns of internal Spanish migration.⁷ These developments fostered

⁵ C.A. Osasuna was founded in November 1920 after discussions resulting in the amalgamations of the clubs *La Sportiva* and *Pamplona*. The new club played at the *San Juan* stadium from 1922 to 1967.

⁶ Caspistegui and Leone (in Caspistegui and Walters 2001: 51–86) charted the growth of football as a spectator sport in Pamplona during the 1920s and 1930s, challenging *La Pelota's* traditional role in Navarese society.

⁷ The population of Pamplona grew in the 1960s and 1970s due to migration from other parts of Spain and from rural Navarre. Further demographic changes in the 1990s encompassed increased immigration and the development of the city's infrastructure. One third of Navarre's current population (630,000) resides in Pamplona.

the synergy underpinning football's assimilation as a spectator sport in Pamplona, the modernity and appeal of the game challenging the hegemony and cultural space previously occupied by traditional sports, such as Pelota (Caspistegui and Leone 2010: 56–58). It also permitted C.A. Osasuna to act as an agent of social cohesion and integration unifying the divergent strands of both the city and the province's fragmented population groups (Vincent 2010: 185).

In a period when the Spanish game was still amateur and regional in structure, the struggle for control and governance between the Basque Football Federation and the fledgling Navarre Football Federation dominated much of *los rojillos'* early years, and was extensively debated in the regional sports press of the time.⁸ This struggle was a metaphor for wider political and cultural debates within a mediated discourse around contested identities and nationalisms as the Spanish state moved from the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera to the volatile political climate of the Second Republic (Vincent 2010: 117–130). Football quickly became woven into the fabric of this political nexus. The Navarre Federation successfully asserted its independence, establishing C.A. Osasuna as a symbol of provincial identity, even though the power of the regional federation *per se* was eroded by the founding of a national, professional league in 1928.⁹ The club was swiftly seized upon both by the municipal council in Pamplona, and subsequently by the government of Navarre as a custodian of cultural values and a powerful representation of distinctive identity (Zusa, personal communication 2014). In this way, it was accorded preferential status in respect of taxation and subsidy, exploiting the time-honoured tradition of *los fueros*; a practice that has continued throughout the club's history (Caspistegui 2012a). These factors shaped and reflected diverse and contested ethnic sensibilities (Caspistegui, personal communication 2014). They are also indicative of the burgeoning state interest in

⁸ The expanding sports press in Navarre during the 1920s campaigned for the autonomy of the Navarre Football Association.

⁹ The foundation of a professional national league in 1928–1929 established the contemporary structure for Spanish football. Osasuna was at the third level, but was swiftly promoted to *LaSegunda* in 1931–1932.

sport and physical activity underpinning the club's formative years as football was introduced in the late nineteenth century and ultimately forged the symbiosis between the club, the city, and the province. These developments were acutely expressed in Navarre (Caspistegui and Leone 2010: 52–59) and were fused with archetypal Navarese values of modesty, hard work, spirit, and courage to manufacture *la furia navarese*¹⁰ in which the style of play adopted by *los rojillos* became synonymous with cultural identity to carve a set of cultural attitudes and mores to harness the team of the province with its quintessential beliefs (O'Brien 2015: 164).

On the field, the club has alternated between the first and second divisions for most of its history, with a few seasons spent in the third tier of the Spanish football pyramid. Although it has never won any major trophy, in recent decades, *los rojillos* have spent two significant periods in La Liga (1980–94 and 2000–14), embracing a memorable run of success between 2004 and 2008, when the club reached the Spanish Cup Final,¹¹ qualified for the UEFA Champions League through their highest ever league position¹² and reached the semi-finals of the UEFA Cup¹³ (now known as UEFA Europa League). Whether in its old *San Juan Stadium* (Miratvilas, personal communication 2014) or in the *El Sadar* since the late 1960s, its teams have prided themselves on maintaining the club's tradition as a focal point of provincial cohesion and identity (Quiroga 2013: 209). The passion of the fans and the compact nature of *El Sadar*, coupled with the club's traditional style of play, gave C.A. Osasuna its reputation as a formidable home side, generating an intimidating atmosphere within the stadium, where all of the Spanish game's elite were vanquished, along with a cluster of famous European sides, during the club's halcyon years. Even in the club's relegation season of 2013–14, the eventual champion Atlético de Madrid was

¹⁰ *La Furia Navarese* This refers to direct, physical, spirited style of play associated with the club and is adapted from the traditional values associated with Basque football. It shares associations with *La Furia Espanola*.

¹¹ *Copa del Rey Final*, 11 June 2005 Real Betis 2 C.A. Osasuna 1 after extra time.

¹² Season 2005–2006: Highest *La Liga* position (4th) and qualification for Champions League.

¹³ Season 2006–2007: UEFA Cup Semi-finals; defeated 2–1 on aggregate by FC Sevilla.

beaten at *El Sadar*.¹⁴ The club's traditions are deeply interwoven into the patterns of alliance and rivalry based on locality, culture, politics, and history at the core of the Spanish game (Ball 2011: 80–81).

Consequently, in this historic vortex, Real Sociedad and FC Alavés are contextualised as *fraternal* opponents, the former being woven into the wider political and cultural dichotomy of Basque identity and radicalism, attracting some support from traditional Basque factionalism within Navarre's political landscape. The relationship with Real Sociedad also encompasses shared football rivalry and common antipathy towards Athletic Bilbao (Zusa, personal communication September 2014). FC Alavés, on the other hand, earns some respect as a small club with a similar societal function as a fulcrum of regional and cultural identity. The enemies of *los rojillos* are framed as Athletic Bilbao, for their wealth, status, and *imperialism* (Caspistigui, personal communication 2014) and for their practice of poaching talented players from C.A. Osasuna's academy to reframe and define them as Basque (as opposed to Navarrese), thereby masking the complexities of ethnicity at the crux of issues pertaining to contested identity (Conversi 2000: 54–80). Paradoxically, this controversial practice provides a financial lifeline to the *Osasunistas* due to the inflated transfer fees the club is able to command for its prized commodities (Azcona, personal communication 2014) by exploiting the Basque-only policy of Athletic Bilbao (Burns 2012: 33). The rivalry with Real Zaragoza is rooted in locality and came to encapsulate the growth of the *ultras*¹⁵ during the 1980s when the right wing fringes of both clubs clashed in outbreaks of sporadic violence.¹⁶ Within the national landscape, Real Madrid is still perceived as the legacy of the Franco regime and synonymous with centralism, whereas FC Barcelona is regarded

¹⁴ 24 February 2014. *El Sadar* Osasuna 3 Atletico de Madrid 0.

¹⁵ In the Spanish context *ultras* has had a more negative connotation, perhaps closer to the Italian case, normally linked to violent incidents inside and outside stadiums. In the last couple of years, though, there has been a bottom-up movement of some supporter groups to adopt a clear non-violent *ultra* style more similar to the German case.

¹⁶ Violence involving *ultras* emerged in the rivalry with Real Zaragoza in the 1980s, with sporadic outbreaks in Pamplona. The *ultras* remain a fringe group at the periphery of the club's followers.

more positively due to the Catalan club's traditional anti-Madrid sentiment.¹⁷ Within this interlocking tapestry, underscored by the wider themes and values that football is able to articulate, C.A. Osasuna has managed to sustain its core identity. The governance and ownership of the club is critical in perpetuating this special societal role and status (Caspistegui and Leone 2010: 355361).

C.A. Osasuna: Governance, Ownership and Community

Football is used as a motive and excuse to establish a Navarre identity in order to oppose the Basques. (Caspistegui and Walton 2001: 186)

The club's statutes define its organisational structure and underlying philosophy. The vision enshrined in the club's genesis suggests that it should stand above politics and factionalism, with its infrastructure and governance designed to bring together the diverse political and cultural elements of Navarese society under the umbrella of a democratic structure in which all the officials and representatives of the club are elected by *socios* (Zusa, personal communication 2014). This model evolved during the club's developmental phase during the 1920s, seeking to insulate it from direct political interference so that it would remain at the margins of ideology and party affiliations (Ibid). This signposted the club's function as a cohesive force of integration, binding rural and urban, conservative and radical, rich and poor around an axis of loyalty projecting a provincial identity (Caspistegui and Leone 2010: 91–106). This status enabled C.A. Osasuna to survive the rigid centralism of Francoism so that it could emerge in the transitional politics of the late 1970s as a nexus of both tradition and change to embrace the democratic credentials of choice and accountability (Caspistegui, personal communication 2014). Even under the constraints imposed on football by the

¹⁷ Whilst more FC Barcelona shirts are visible, Pamplona has more Real Madrid *peñas*.

Franco regime, the club was able to utilise the historic tradition of *los fueros* to maintain a limited degree of self-governance, even allowing for adherence to the contemporary practice of the appointment of compliant presidents during this era (Burns 2012: 115).

From the late 1970s, the club cultivated the image of the club as a cohesive, well run entity, fusing the organisational structure of the *Junta Directiva*,¹⁸ the assembly and the individual member to govern on the basis of transparent and regular elections, combining a reputation for financial solvency until the mid-1990s with a sense of tradition and identity (Zusa, personal communication 2014). This enabled C.A. Osasuna to resist the trend during the 1980s and 1990s of the financial meltdown of the vast majority of Spanish clubs, requiring direct government intervention and regulation to stabilise the dire economic situation.¹⁹ The club's infrastructure was able to develop a symbiotic relationship with local and provincial government in Navarre, based on the formal and informal mechanics of mutual vested interest and the complex interplay of political patronage (Caspistigui 2012a).

Within the democratic decentralised Spain of devolved political power, *los rojillos* became a blueprint of a small successful team run by its members, with one member one vote protecting cultural stewardship in which the pyramidal structure of president, assembly, and member ran the club prudently, producing its share of star players²⁰ through adherence to the traditional supply from the academy. This process created the lifeblood of players imbued with

¹⁸ *La Junta Directiva*: The executive board of the club and real power base Constitutionally elected by and accountable to members but the focus of much recent criticism.

¹⁹ Following mounting debts of Spanish clubs in the 1980s, the 1990 *Spanish Sports Act (Ley del Deporte)* attempted to restructure clubs as conventional businesses, with the *socio*-owned clubs being exempted. This ultimately failed to solve the financial problems of these clubs. By 2012 a new protocol was reached to attempt more financial viability. C.A. Osasuna operates within these parameters.

²⁰ C.A. Osasuna is traditionally a selling club. Muguero was the iconic figure of the club's rise in the 1930s, his style synonymous with the province's cultural values. He has become a folkloric icon for the team's identity. In 1961 Zoco and Ruiz were sold to Real Madrid for six million pesetas. More recently, Azpilicueta (Chelsea), Javi Martinez (Athletic Bilbao and Bayern Munich), and Monreal (Arsenal) came from *La Cantera*, the club's academy.

traditional Navarese values and virtues, dating back to iconic figures in the 1920s and 1930s.²¹ The contemporary incarnation of Osasuna's academy is expressed through *Tajonar*, the club's modern coaching complex a few miles from Pamplona, reaffirming the link between club, player, society, and community, which is pivotal to the club's tradition and identity (Azcona, personal communication, 2014).

By the 2004–2005 season, under Izco's Presidency, the fortunes of C. A. Osasuna had improved to suggest that it was possible to combine the tradition of sound finance, member ownership, and a local-provincial identity with unparalleled success on the field.²² This came at a time when the Spanish/European game was reflecting seminal changes around football's increased globalisation and commodification dramatically shaping and impacting upon ownership, finance, and mediatisation. *Los rojillos* stood out and were admired as a bastion of democracy and tradition in which fans' voices could still be heard and represented. This perspective appealed to feelings of idealism and nostalgic romanticism that suggested it was still possible to preserve the organic grassroots link between supporters and team. Further, scrutiny of C.A. Osasuna challenges this folkloric vision and provides a more critical analysis of the club itself and its model of governance.

The Contemporary Context of C.A. Osasuna: Reform and Sustainability

'The socios are most important at the level of identity within the club'

(Caspistigui, personal communication 2014)

'The contemporary power of the socios is more symbolic than real'

(Zusa, personal communication 2014)

²¹ *La Cantera* is the traditional practice of developing local players this is central to preserving the club's identity. Eight of the current first team squad stem from it.

²² Patxi Izco was President from 2002 to 2012. His legacy is mixed, overseeing the most successful period in the club's history but leaving the club close to relegation, with huge debts.

From season 2007–08 onwards, a gradual decline in the on-field fortunes of the club led to a soul searching examination of C.A. Osasuna's reputation, viability, and sustainability as a *socio*-owned club. This demise is set against the backdrop of the inability of member-owned clubs to achieve financial viability within the changing landscape of Spanish football (Goldblatt 2006: 750–752) and is underscored by Spain's wider economic crisis and recession. For several seasons, the team continued to preserve its status in *La Liga* via a number of last day escapes from relegation, which reinforced the folkloric history of the club's spirit and core values.²³ Relegation came somewhat inevitably at the end of season 2013–14. The longer-term reasons for this demise are rooted in the club's mounting debt from the mid-1990s, as a consequence of a combination of players' spiralling salaries and the erosion of the historic values of *La Cantera*, the club's academy, emphasised by the decision to sell star players, particularly to Athletic Bilbao (Zusa, personal communication 2014). For a time, these factors were masked by the twin assets of the team's unprecedented success in the years following their promotion to *La Liga* in 2000 and the fact that from 2005 the government of Navarre became more proactively involved in acting as a broker to restructure the club's increasing debts. A deal was struck whereby the province streamlined the cluster of banks and creditors which had pushed *los rojillos* to the brink of bankruptcy into one debt of some €20 million, to be paid back in annual instalments over a ten-year period (Ibid). In return, the *El Sadar* was renamed *El Reyno de Navarra*, seeking to exploit the marketing potential of football to enhance tourism by way of embellishing a distinctive Navarese history and identity²⁴ (Caspistegui, personal communication 2014).

This partnership guaranteed the club's short-term to mid-term future and secured the *socio* model. It also allowed the province to derive some political assets from its relationship with the club as a symbol of cultural unity and cohesion, whilst exploiting the province's special historic economic status.

²³ The club made the first of several last day improbable escapes at the end of season 2008–2009, defeating Real Madrid 2–1, at *El Sadar*.

²⁴ *El Reyno de Navarra* was a name given to *El Sadar* from 2005 to 2012 as part of the deal brokered with the Government of Navarre.

The deal was controversial as the rebranding caused objections on ideological grounds due to the inclusion of the prefix 'Reyno', as it was reminiscent of Navarre's feudal past (Zusa, personal communication 2014). Under Izco's Presidency, the plan seemed to work as the club subsequently experienced the most successful period in its history. The link between the club and province was legitimised and insulated by the *socio* model itself, with the hierarchical governance structure giving the board significant power in determining the direction of the club's affairs.

As long as on-field success was maintained, the image of a club in which ownership, governance, and community worked together to keep tradition alive could be fostered and projected in the contemporary global marketplace of the game. Beneath this veneer, however, the power of the *socios* to influence the club's governance was more symbolic than real (Caspistegui, personal communication 2014) with a very limited role in the daily administration or management of *los rojillos*. The fallout from Izco's resignation in 2012 after ten years at the helm, exacerbated by the team's relegation two years later brought both the management of the club and the essence of the *socio* model under scrutiny. This reflected a growing tension between the grassroots membership and the governing elite, as the reality of the club's debt became more apparent. This created certain paradoxes. The number of *socios* prior to the start of season 2014–15 in *La Liga Adelante* (the sponsored and commercial denomination of Spain's second division that year, now known as *Liga 1–2–3*) increased to over 13,200, a statement of loyalty to the club and its values by its supporters. This was underscored by public and press criticism of the club's alleged mismanagement over recent seasons, leading to demands for more democracy, transparency, and structural reform (Zusa, personal communication 2014). The policy of directly involving the provincial government in regulating the club's debt was revoked, with the result that the stadium returned to its previous name of *El Sadar*. The deal had invariably been politically divisive, of mixed and dubious benefit to the parties concerned, drawing criticism for the creation of an unaccountable cartel operating between the club and the province, obscuring and hiding the reality of the club's financial plight, and foreshadowing the allegations of bribery and match fixing which surfaced during 2015.

The pressure for change stemmed from the crisis triggered by the club's relegation, but also from criticism of how the *socio* model had operated in practice. Although the principle of one member one vote is enshrined in the club's statutes and tradition, a core of influential members have two votes, one individual and one business, leading to the formation of powerful cliques at the core of C.A. Osasuna's governance²⁵ (Ibid). Moreover, although each member has the right to stand for the office of President, a minimum of €1 million was required to run for the office, thus retaining power within a small, wealthy provincial business elite in *La Junta Directiva*. Given the extent of the club's current debt and the lack of suitable candidates, presidential elections scheduled for September 2014 were delayed until December the same year²⁶ with the club being run on a temporary basis by the General Assembly. This state of flux was resolved by the results of the December 2014 elections, which saw Luis Sabalza Iriate emerge as the club's new President, with a four-year mandate and a programme stressing the financial austerity of the period ahead. He began his term of office with a commitment to reform, transparency, and the goal of returning *los rojillos* to a position of financial solvency, with the ambition of having the club firmly established in *La Liga* by 2020. By early 2016, the club committed both to the stringent provisions of the Navarrese Law of Transparency (2001) and to a ten-year viability plan which sought to keep *los socios* more directly involved and informed about the club's strategies.

The mood of cautious realism and uncertainty surrounding the club's longer-term future remained pending on the political consequences of regional elections in Navarre in 2015, in which the Basque faction currently holds a substantial majority within the governing coalition.²⁷

²⁵ The principle of one member one vote is part of the club's constitution. In practice businesses have two votes; this has allowed cartels to develop within the General Assembly. This practice has been a key target for those advocating reform.

²⁶ After they were suspended in September, elections for a new president and *Junta Directiva* took place on 14 December 2014.

²⁷ The longer term future of the club remains in the balance until the current regional government decides whether to make a financial commitment to help further the club or not. In view of recent European Commission decisions on state aid to Spanish football clubs, it is plausible to consider that any intervention by the regional government will only be moderate.

There are signs of a more accountable and open management model which is gradually re-establishing increased confidence from the club's supporters.

It is to be hoped that the new era ushers in an end to the impasse and lack of direction which has been reinforced by the innate conservatism of the General Assembly, in which seniority is emphasised, meaning that new or younger members have little or no influence in the governance of the club. During the close season of 2014, the future of C.A. Osasuna was under threat, so that although supporters remained loyal to the team and the club's traditions, a sense of shock at the extent of the club's poor management and the level of its debt was discernible. The stated desire of the new *Junta Directiva* for transparency and reform needs to produce tangible results, both to secure legitimacy for the governance of the club and to restore the faith of the *socios* that a more open *modus operandi* can be established.

The juxtaposition of these football-centred, economic, and political factors raises the question as to whether the *socio* model is sustainable for a small club, such as C.A. Osasuna. Cleavages have existed between the passion and support of fans, and the practices of the board, although the club's democratic principles and philosophy remain intact. It is doubtful as to whether it can prosper in the long term within the higher echelons of the Spanish League if it cannot secure either the backing of wealthy provincial backers or the influx of outside investment needed to sustain this. Tradition and folklore remain pivotal to the club's identity, and the lifeblood supplied by the academy needs to flourish to ensure this longer-term survival. Although *Tajonar* is expensive to run with its numerous teams and levels, it is critical if the current form of ownership and cultural stewardship is to be maintained (Azcona, personal communication 2014). During the 1990s, the club became more oligarchic in nature, leaving the legacy that reform was urgently needed both to put it on a sounder financial basis and reassert its bond of community and identity with members and fans. This gradual reform requires those elected to preserve the club's ethos to be more open, democratic and accountable to the membership if trust in the governance of the club is to be re-established and its damaged reputation repaired (Zusa, personal communication 2014).

Following relegation in 2014, the club has spent two seasons in *La Liga Adelante*. Rather surprisingly, after a turbulent first season in the second tier, a late run of results took C.A. Osasuna to the play-off final at the climax to season 2015–16, in which it defeated FC Girona to reclaim its place amongst the Spanish game's elite. The next two seasons are crucial in securing the club's future; the recent history of financial uncertainty, coupled with a lack of governance and accountability will be offset to a certain extent by the increased flow of television revenue into the club. It is a matter of conjecture as to whether C.A. Osasuna will fluctuate between the first and second tiers of the Spanish game, or will be able to retain its position in *La Liga* on a more stable basis. The capacity of *los rojillos* to act as an apolitical, unifying force within Navarre's complex political divisions has been potentially restored (Ibid). In the longer term, it is a moot question whether the political and economic realities of the contemporary Spanish game make the *socio* model anachronistic and non-viable for a club such as C.A. Osasuna, which lacks the status, cultural, and political power of the three other *socio* owned clubs (Burns 2012: 92&315).

The conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is that the *socio* model will not easily translate across other football cultures (Russell 1997: 30–52). It remains quintessentially Spanish in nature, deeply embedded in the cultural, political, and regional factors which have shaped the Spanish game. Furthermore, its significance is more symbolic than real in respect of wielding actual power in the daily running of the clubs, being prone to manifesting hierarchical structures of vested interest (Caspistegui 2014). For smaller clubs such as C.A. Osasuna, the on and off field pressures of the contemporary game presents a stark choice between adherence to folkloric tradition at the lower levels of the football pyramid, with either only the goal of survival in the game's elite or abandoning the model in the quest for instant success provoking dissent and division amongst supporters. This is ultimately the challenge that smaller clubs seeking to imitate or emulate *los rojillos* will face. For the idealist and the democrat, it is to be hoped that the recent on-field success of C.A. Osasuna will witness the club emerge from this bleak chapter in its history with the *socio* model refreshed and reform as it takes its place in *La Liga* once more.

Conclusion

'Supporting Osasuna is a feeling, a sentiment. It is a model against the times. Navarre is a distinctive community.' (Zusa September 2014)

Anyone believing that Spanish football consists only of the global mega-spectacle of *El Clásico* or the *tiki-taka* inspired achievements of the national team should think again. On 6 September 2014, a fiercely contested local derby between C.A. Osasuna and Deportivo Alavés took place at *El Sadar* in front of over 16,000 spectators. The match showed that the heartbeat of locality and regionalism still resonates strongly in the backwater of the game's second tier, away from the high octane profile and media saturation coverage of *La Liga*. The rich tapestry of folkloric tradition and identity was there for all to witness in the friendly rivalry of the atmosphere generated by the supporters of both teams, giving intensity to the occasion from the first to last minute. The support of the home fans in particular was admirable and unrelenting, even when their team was 3–0 down early in the second half.

Although the stadium is modern, it is tight and compact, with the fans hugging the touchlines. It bears a certain resemblance to the old Athletic Bilbao's *San Mamés* in the vibrancy of the songs and chants reverberating around the ground throughout the match. Although facilities are basic, the free programme handed out to supporters before the game provided a refreshing change to the expensive, glossy public relations magazines, with little or no content, which are so prevalent in the English Premier League. This and so much more about the occasion was reminiscent of an earlier era in the game. The tone was nostalgic, the passion fervent.

As for the match itself, *los rojillos*, in spite of their bright attacking football, displaying all of the club's traditional values of spirit, energy, and commitment, were well beaten by a better-organised and more tactically astute Alavés side by three goals to one, demonstrating the challenges the team faces as it adjusted to playing in the *Liga Adelante*. The rivalry between supporters was intense, though never hostile; revealing more about what connects the two clubs than what divides them. Both clubs

have striven to maintain their own distinctive traditions of provincial ethnicity and identity, whilst experiencing turbulent times in recent seasons, as reflected by their performances on the pitch. Spain's second tier has been competitive in recent seasons, with a cluster of former clubs from the top flight attempting to return to the elite under severe economic constraints. *El Sadar* remains a difficult venue for sides at this level. The blend of youth and experience in the current squad, allied to the club's renewed commitment to their academy, subsequently bore fruit with the team's promotion to *La Liga* at the end of season 2015/16. The support and passion of the fans, juxtaposed with the club's heritage, continued to be a significant asset in underpinning this swift return. This provides grounds for optimism if it can be harnessed to the aforementioned structural reform and financial readjustment to secure more stability. If this can be realised, *El Sadar* could become the intimidating arena it once was, which made *los rojillos* such a formidable opponent. The derby against Alavés showed that the roots of Spanish football are strong and vibrant outside the higher echelons of *La Liga*. The special place of C.A. Osasuna as a small club with *socio* governance and ownership is celebrated each time the team takes the field at *El Sadar*. Although the model may have been tainted by the events of recent seasons, the lexicon of the Spanish game would be the poorer should it be eclipsed and ultimately disappear.

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Part 2

Football Governance and Supporter Activism Outside the 'Big Five' European Leagues

8

Football Club Ownership in the Republic of Croatia: A Model for Supporters' Inclusion in Football Governance in South-East Europe?

Petar Ceronja, Marko Ivkošić and Siniša Petrović

Introduction

Sport has undoubtedly become more than just a game practised in people's free time. It is probably one of the most globally integrating phenomena and means of interaction among people and nations. This is especially so with football, often presented as the world's most popular game. The financial implications of football are huge, and that equally applies to all industries

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connected with it, such as tourism, sporting equipment, media, etc. Bearing this in mind, it is easy to perceive the various interests of different groups. Equally importantly, one could unequivocally conclude that the issues related to football do not necessarily apply to other sports; only a few of them may only be remotely compared to football in such respects. Thus, the views and thoughts about the ownership and governance of football clubs ultimately pertain only to football and not to clubs in other sports.

One of the main aspects of the development of football as a game and a business activity is its corporatisation. Previously, football clubs were organised as non-profit organisations, whether unincorporated or incorporated associations, depending on a particular nation's legal framework. In many countries, most football clubs continue to be set up as associations irrespective of whether they are professional or amateur. Nevertheless, it is notable that in some countries more and more football clubs are structured as companies – mostly private, although there are examples of football clubs set up as public companies with shares traded on a stock exchange (see e.g. the transformation of some football clubs' legal form in the countries such as Germany and Spain discussed in this volume).

That possibility raises several questions. Whether these football clubs, organised as companies, are to be subject to the same rules and principles of corporate governance as any other company; how to reconcile rational profit-oriented goals of a company with sporting goals; how to ensure a level playing field if football clubs that are companies and associations participate at the same level of competition while different rules apply to their management depending of their legal form. Furthermore, would it be inappropriate that some rules should be applied to all football clubs, eventually taking into account the popularity of football derived from the interest of the public and spectators? How should the optimal level of involvement of supporters in the management of football clubs be found, if any?

After these introductory remarks, the chapter addresses the questions of club ownership and status according to Croatian national legislation, particularly explaining the options of incorporating football clubs as civil associations or joint-stock companies under Croatian law. After that, an option of a civil (supporters) association as a shareholder of a joint-stock company is explored, followed by an explanation of a model where a civil (supporters)

association is a consumer of a majority shareholder's management rights. The chapter ends with a short conclusion.

Club Ownership and Status According to the Croatian Sports Act

According to the National Sports Act,¹ Croatian football clubs may be either non-profit associations or sports public limited liability companies² (joint-stock companies).³ It is worth noting that the option as to whether to structure a football club in one of the two available legal forms is available regardless of whether the club is amateur or professional. A football club is considered to be professional if it has concluded contracts of professional players or contracts of employment with more than half of its registered athletes in senior competitions in relation to the total number of athletes on the roster for the current competition season, or if the club fulfils special conditions determined by the national football federation.⁴ Needless to say, as one can expect, all existing football clubs structured as companies are professional. In the current First League of the Croatian Football Championship, five out of the ten football clubs are joint-stock companies.

The possibility that a football club has the legal form of a joint-stock company is an attempt to promote business initiative in sport. The previous regulations on sport that preceded the 2006 Sports Act already made possible for a football club to be a company. They were, however,

¹ Art. 19 para.1 of the Sports Act (Official Gazette No 71/2006, 150/2008, 124/2010, 124/2011, 86/2012, 94/13, 85/15, 19/16).

² Sports joint stock company is not a special legal form different from a joint-stock company, but the term sports' is used only to indicate the main activity of the company (participation in sports competitions). Nevertheless, as it shall be explained *infra*, there are some special legal provisions applicable to sports companies.

³ Essentially, there are no substantive reasons why a football club may not be established as another type of company, notably as a private limited liability company (German GmbH type of company). At the time of enacting the Sports Act in 2006, the focus was, however, on the obligatory transformation of non-profit oriented associations into companies and it was estimated that a public limited company is the optimal legal form, bearing in mind the expectations that current members of associations (supporters of the club) would likely be future shareholders.

⁴ Art. 24, para.1 of the Sports Act.

restricted in comparison with companies in other sectors in a way that companies whose object is to participate in sports competitions were not allowed to distribute the profit they gain through running their activities, but such profit could only be used for the purpose of conducting and developing their sports activities. It is interesting to note that, at the same time, a possible profit gained by performing other sports activities (sports recreation, sports training, and the management of sports infrastructure) could be distributed.

The existing Sports Act permits the profit of a company to be distributed to shareholders. Nevertheless, the peculiarity of the issue is the introduction of the so-called sports reserves (reserves for sports activities), which a football company must accumulate in addition to the reserves that are obligatory for any other company. These reserves can be used only for the performance and improvement of sports activities related to the sports development of children, which is an attempt to force the club to invest in young players instead of seeking mature talent from the market. Only after the legal requirement of making these sports reserves is fulfilled, the remaining profit may be shared amongst the shareholders.

A sports public limited liability company may be established either by the founding of a new company or by the transformation of a non-profit association. That transformation can be obligatory or voluntary. The latter is an option for any football club which is a non-profit association regardless of whether that club has a professional or amateur status. The transformation from a non-profit association into a company is obligatory for any professional football club which has met the conditions to initiate a bankruptcy procedure established following a compulsory business audit. Obligatory transformation was legally prescribed with the aim of avoiding otherwise unavoidable bankruptcy proceedings and, consequently, liquidation of the over-indebted clubs. This notably preserves the sporting essence of the club. Since such legal procedure under the same circumstances is not at the disposal of legal entities engaged in other activities, it was clearly aimed at satisfying the requests of the supporters who wished to safeguard the sporting tradition of their clubs.

Association is generally any form of free and voluntary association of several natural or legal persons who are bound together for the purpose of ensuring their benefits and furthering their mutual interests or supporting their beliefs and objectives, but without the intention of gaining

profit. Thus, the objective of a football club that is a non-profit association should not be the acquisition of profit for itself, for its members or for a third party. That does not mean, however, that the association should not or could not gain profit. The profit can be achieved as a result of the successful business activities of the association, which is also the reason why it is prescribed that along with its elementary activities, the association can perform activities by which it gains income (as auxiliary, secondary activities). The law only prescribes that an association should not perform such activities with the principal aim of gaining profit. If, in the performance of its activities, the association gains profit, it should be used exclusively for the performance and development of the association's activities. This also applies to football clubs. An association is by default not a profit taxpayer, but if it performs economic activities, the tax administration can on its own initiative or upon the initiative of other taxpayers or other persons declare in a special decree that an association is a profit taxpayer.⁵

Generally, an association can have the status of a legal person or it can be without legal personality. As for football clubs, it would by definition be more common for them to have legal personality and all Croatian football clubs created as associations are legal persons. An association is liable to its creditors with all its assets while its members are not liable with their personal assets. In principle, football clubs which are associations are not subject to external scrutiny other than the general supervision of the administrative office concerning the legality of its actions and sports inspection which has the task to supervise the sporting aspects. Probably, the most important form of supervision is the internal supervision by its members who may notify the body defined by the articles of association of any irregularity. If the member's warning is not considered at the session of the competent body in the period of 30 days from the delivered written warning and the irregularities are not eliminated, a member has the right to initiate court proceedings in order to protect their rights. This provision is fundamentally important to ensure

⁵ See Art. 2, para. 1, 6 and 7 of the Profit Tax Act, (Official Gazette No. 177/2004, 90/2005, 57/2006, 146/2008, 80/2010, 22/2012, 148/2013, 143/14, 50/16).

the statutory principle of democratic representation of the members in the competent bodies of an association. Namely, the hierarchically highest body of an association is the assembly which may consist of either all the association's members or only their delegates. Since it is thus possible that some of the members do not directly take part in any decision-making processes within the association, it is essential to endorse their membership rights and to ensure that they are properly represented.

One of the conclusions of this chapter, as it is discussed further ahead, is that the influence of members in the management of a Croatian football club is not that evident when the clubs assume the legal form of a non-profit member association. Two of the most popular Croatian clubs, GNK Dinamo Zagreb and Hajduk Split are incorporated in two very different manners. GNK Dinamo Zagreb is a civil (member) association while Hajduk Split is a joint-stock company. However, due to statutory provisions in Dinamo Zagreb, members of the club have very limited participation rights on the management of the club. On the other hand, Hajduk Split fans have a decisive influence on the managing of the club, although they are just minor shareholders of the club. Thus, this chapter may challenge some of the traditional assumptions in relation to supporter activism, whereby a traditional member association legal structure is equated with bigger influence of the supporters on how the club is managed (a similar discussion on the real influence of supporters in traditional member football clubs – as compared to clubs that are limited companies – can be seen in Jim O'Brien's contribution to this volume analysing the case of CA Osasuna and Spanish football).

The Football Club as a Civil Association under Croatian Law

Traditionally, under Croatian law, all sport clubs were incorporated as civil (non-profit) associations. Only the changes in the 2006 Croatian Sports Act have systematically regulated other legal forms for sports (football) clubs.

Legal Regime Governing Football Clubs

According to Art.14 para. 3 of the Sports Act, which addresses the formation, internal structure and organisation, registration and termination of sports clubs associations, these questions are governed by the Croatian Association Act.⁶ This means that football clubs which have the legal form of a civil association are basically governed by the Association Act in all matters which are important for the relationship between the club and its members (supporters).

Theoretically, if a particular question is regulated by a particular law in a different way from a law which is more general in its content, the particular provision will apply (*lex specialis derogate legi generali* – a rule governing a specific subject matter overriding a rule which only governs general matters). Thus, if a particular question is regulated by the Sports Act, as an act which recognises the existence of a particular type of an association (sports club), this rule would apply before the rules were provided in the Association Act. However, the Croatian Sports Act does not have particular provisions regarding management rights of the members of the club. Accordingly, the management structures of football clubs (civil associations) use this possibility to limit supporters' influence in managing the club.

Structure of the Football Clubs as Civil Non-Profit Associations

The highest body of a civil association is the general assembly (simply called assembly). An assembly of an association should get together all the members of the association, or the representatives of those members (delegates).⁷ As far as the authors are aware, there is not yet any example where all members of the club are at the same time members of the assembly in any top division football club in Croatia. Importantly, the

⁶ Official Gazette No. 74/2014.

⁷ See Art. 17 para. 1. of the Association Act.

assembly has the crucial decision-making powers in the club.⁸ Thus, it is no surprise that assemblies are usually made out of people who have a political influence in a local community or who sponsor the club in different manners. Having that in mind, it is clear that the majority of supporters basically have a slim-to-none chance of being a member of the assembly.

This problem would not be that important if the clubs secured alternative mechanisms of supporters' participation in club management. The most elementary way of doing that would be organising fair and democratic elections of assembly delegates. Such provisions should be part of the statute or other bylaws of the association. However, in reality, the clubs ignore the provisions and have very creative solutions to the establishment of mutual relations between the members, the assembly, and other bodies of the club.⁹ The reasons for that are 'loose' provisions of the Associations Act which allow a high degree of autonomy in determining the internal structure of the associations without any real and efficient mechanisms of ensuring the minimum protection of the management rights of the members.

In addition to the assembly, an association can have other bodies with different names but similar functions (e.g. management board, executive board, supervisory board, etc.). The authority of the bodies lies solely in the provisions of the statutes of the association. Undoubtedly, members of the association, if fulfilling their duties towards the association (e.g. paying a yearly membership) have certain rights. These rights, unlike the rights of shareholders, are not property rights because associations are non-profit organisations, but management rights. The most important management right should be the right to vote (Barbić 2002: 762). However, unlike the rules which govern joint-stock companies, the Association Act does not foresee an efficient way of enforcing voting

⁸ See Art. 18 para.1 of the Association Act. For example, it appoints members of other bodies and decides on the internal structure and financial reports of the association etc.

⁹ The statute of GNK Dinamo Zagreb, for example, has a provision by which the assembly is appointing members of the executive board of the club, and the executive board of the club upon the completion of the mandate of the assembly nominates new members of the assembly, which are confirmed by the old members of the assembly.

rights of its members, neither by court intervention nor by the intervention of the administrative body.

The Football Club as a Joint-Stock Company under Croatian Law

The notion of a joint-stock company as a legal entity (in general) was introduced in Croatia only in 1995. The reason for this was obvious – until 1991 the Republic of Croatia was part of the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, with a socialist, state controlled economy with very limited rights of private ownership. Therefore, until the change of the constitutional architecture and a transition to democratic political institutions and market economy, there was no possibility of even considering football clubs as joint-stock companies. However, immediately after the transition, in the early 1990s there was not much talk about the need for introducing any kind of corporations in professional sports. This need appeared only in the early 2000s when it became clear that top professional football clubs, partially due to their legal form of a non-profit civil association, suffered heavy financial losses, with minor possibilities for improving their results. The legislator considered that a legal form of joint-stock company would be an appropriate one for conducting business activities in top-level professional sports and decided to introduce through a new Sports Act in 2006 the possibility of incorporating a football club as a joint-stock company.

The Legal Regime of Football Clubs as Joint Stock Companies

Football clubs which are incorporated as joint-stock companies are submitted to a legal regime applicable to companies in general. The main act regulating companies in Croatia is the Commercial Companies Act (Companies Act). Its provisions, therefore, apply to football clubs that are incorporated as joint stock companies.

The basic rule here is – in line with general legal provisions – that a shareholder may be any natural or legal person, domestic or foreign. In order to ensure the uncertainty of sports competitions, limitations were set up in the field of the acquisition of shares. Shares in such companies cannot be acquired by a person who directly or indirectly (e.g. through affiliated persons) performs activities or business that might directly impact the competition system in a certain sport.¹⁰ In the form of *presumptio iuris*, Art. 34. of the Sports Act defines that persons acquiring shares are affiliated persons if they agree to act consensually in regard to the acquisition of such shares from the issuer or in relation to acquire voting rights towards the issuer, if one such person holds shares on the account of the other person, or one person directly or indirectly controls such other person. The legal consequence of this illegal acquisition of shares is the obligation of their immediate sale, and until the holder of shares disposes of these shares, he is not granted any of the rights that are usually vested in a company share within a joint stock company.¹¹

The rights from the above shares are assigned to a mediator that is elected by the Commission for professional sports clubs.¹² Further limitations on the acquisition of shares in a joint stock company relate to the volume of participation in the ordinary stock capital of the company. Accordingly, the law defines that one person is entitled to hold shares in multiple companies of the same sport exceeding 1 per cent of the overall ordinary share capital – in any such companies.¹³ In such a manner, the Croatian law radically solves the problem of the so-called Multi-Club Ownership (Weiler 2006: 27). The credibility and authenticity of the sport may be damaged if one natural or legal person is allowed to acquire shares in two or more clubs of the same sport, thus increasing the risk of damaging the balance of any sports competition.

¹⁰ *Argumentum ex art.* 31 para 4 Sports Act. For instance, it is stated that shareholders of a sports joint-stock company cannot be: athletes competing in the same sports competitions of the same sport, referees in the same sport, sport managers and persons that are members of legal persons organising sports betting.

¹¹ Art. 35 para 1 Sports Act.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Art. 31 para 2 and 3 Sports Act. This provision does not apply to the Republic of Croatia, units of local management and self-management and the City of Zagreb.

Originally, such limitations were autonomously provided within the different sports federations, but in time these have also been integrated into national laws on sports.¹⁴

The maximum volume of participation of one person in the ordinary share capital of a sports joint stock company is 25 per cent, while in the case that a person acquires shares in excess of 25 per cent of the ordinary share capital, the consent of the Commission must be obtained.¹⁵ Sports joint-stock companies are not subject to the Law on taking over stock companies,¹⁶ which means that the Croatian agency for control of financial services does not act as a regulating or supervising body here that follows the procedure of transfer and assignment of shares. This duty is held by the Commission, which together with the clubs and sports associations and federations, follows the regularity of sports competitions. Along with the limitations in acquisition and disposal of shares of a sports joint-stock company, the law also clearly defines that the natural persons cannot be management or supervisory board members.¹⁷ The ordinary share capital of such a sports joint-stock company may not be below HRK 500,000 (ca. €66,700).¹⁸ It may be paid in cash and rights, but at establishment of the company or transformation at least the above minimum amount must be paid in cash.

The specialty regarding the distribution of profit earned in a sports joint-stock company compared to other stock companies lies in the definition of the term of legal reserves, and their content and amount (Petrović 2009: 85). These legal reserves, along with 'general' legal reserves defined by the Companies Act,¹⁹ also contain special (sports) legal reserves that may be used only for the performance and improvement of the sports activities of developing children in sports. After covering losses from previous years, based on general provisions for stock companies, 5 per cent of the net profit must be allocated to the

¹⁴The NBA statute in article 3 defines Conflict of Interest'. See: *ibidem*, p. 29.

¹⁵*Argumentum ex Art.* 32 para 1 Sports Act.

¹⁶Art. 28 para 2 Sports Act.

¹⁷Art. 38 para 1 and 2 Sports Act.

¹⁸Art. 30. para 1 Sports Act.

¹⁹Art. 220.-223. Companies Act.

legal reserves until the overall legal reserve reaches 5 per cent of the ordinary share capital of the sports company, that is, even higher amounts if defined so by the company statutes. Along with this part of the net profit that is carried into 'general' legal reserves, at least half of the remaining net profit must be allocated into special sports reserves.²⁰

The intent here was to create a balance between two legitimate interests. On the one hand, there is the interest of the shareholders to have the profit of the company from business operations paid out; on the other there is the interest to maintain and secure sustainable sports activities in participating in sports competitions, by introducing this mandatory duty to allocate into the sports reserves amounts that are dedicated exclusively to the sports training of children.

The Management Rights of Shareholders in Football Clubs Structured as Joint Stock Companies

The Croatian Sports Act does not have any special provisions governing the structure of a sport club that has adopted the form of a joint-stock company. Thus, provisions of the Companies Act fully apply in order to dictate the rights and duties of the shareholders. This basically means that a football club that adopts the legal personality of a joint-stock company needs to adopt all the formal requirements provided by the relevant legislation.

Each joint-stock company has basically the same internal structure (Barbić 2013). Under Croatian law, joint-stock companies can either be incorporated in a *two-tier* or a *one-tier* system. Because the *one-tier* system is rather a new concept in Croatian law, only the *two-tier* system of corporate governance will be discussed.

Every joint-stock company needs to have certain mandatory bodies: board of directors, supervisory board, and a general meeting. Authorities of these bodies and their mutual relations are very precisely prescribed by a mandatory set of provisions. To simplify, the obligatory internal

²⁰ Art. 37. par. 3. SA.

structure of the company's bodies could be described as follows: the board of directors is appointed by the supervisory board, the supervisory board is elected by the general meeting, and the general meeting is convened usually once a year by the board of directors. The board of directors is authorised to conduct the company's business, and the supervisory board is authorised to supervise the board of directors. Each body has a different set and list of authorities, and nobody is expected to override the company's hierarchy.

The statutes of the company can contain provisions which differ from the solutions of the Companies Act only when allowed by the Act. Statutes may contain provisions about other questions and matters only if it is not ruled out by the Companies Act.²¹ Every statute is scrutinised in detail by a judge of a Commercial Court upon the adoption of the statute by original shareholders. If a statute is not fully in line with the provisions of the Companies Act, the Court will not allow the company to be incorporated. The same goes for the modifications of the statute.

The rights of shareholders could be divided into two major groups: property rights and management rights. Key management rights would be the rights to participate in a general meeting of the company, including the right to debate, the right to be informed, the right to file a law suit for declaring the decision of a general meeting to be null and void, and the voting right. Some of the management rights cannot be quantified by the number of shares a particular shareholder is holding, such as the right to participate, the right to sue, and the right to debate. However, the voting right is quantified, which means that a person with a bigger share in share capital has a more powerful influence on the decision-making process in the company. This does not apply to the day-to-day business decisions which are under the authority of the board of directors.

The most important thing to stress is that the rights of shareholders are secured by efficient mechanisms of internal and external control. Internally, other bodies of the company do not have the authority to

²¹ See Art. 174 para 4 of the Companies Act.

decide on matters which are in the authority of the general meeting. Each shareholder has a right to participate in the discussions on general meetings, a right to ask questions and demand precise answers from members of other bodies and a right to be informed about company affairs. Externally, if a certain body or the majority of shareholders breach some of the rights established by the Companies Act, each shareholder has a right to demand the protection of the Commercial Court which is secured by mandatory provisions of the Companies Act. It is easy to conclude that the difference between the position of a member of an association and a shareholder in a joint-stock company is rather dramatic, especially when it comes to the execution and the protections of the management rights.

Supporters Associations as Shareholders of a Football Joint-Stock Company

A shareholder of a sports joint-stock company, as is the case of any other such company, can be any natural or legal person, domestic or foreign, including associations. An association is a private, legal community of persons, where members have exclusive management rights: a) the right to vote and the right to be elected; b) the right to appeal against decisions of the bodies of the association; c) the right to be informed; and d) the right to use equipment, devices, and spaces of the association (Barbic 2002: 739).

Similar to any other association, the associations of supporters can opt to acquire shares of their 'beloved' club. If a sports joint stock company is founded *ab initio*, this would only present a theoretical option, because there first has to be a club in which the fans will be rooted. Hence, supporters associations can acquire shares only as derivatives, by acquiring shares in an organised manner from existing shareholders of the sports joint stock company. Such shares could be assigned and transferred onto the association free of charge. In a mandatory or voluntary procedure of the transformation of a sports association into a sports joint stock company, priority in subscribing shares in the second or third subscription rounds is granted only to members of the association that is being

transformed.²² In the procedures of transformation executed so far in the Republic of Croatia, the participation of association (club) members in the transformation itself has been minor, because in none of these cases in the second and third rounds of subscription for shares have more than 3 per cent of such shares been reserved by the members. That is to say, a very small number of club members became club shareholders individually. If those members wanting to acquire shares would organise themselves as a fan association, their impact on managing activities would not be significant due to their small stake of shares. In conclusion, we could say that no supporters association has any major impact on management issues in the clubs that have been transformed into joint stock companies in the Republic of Croatia through holding shares so far. Clubs that are still organised as associations do not have the possibility to attract any investors by transferring their key business operation of participation in sports competitions onto a sister company, because this is clearly forbidden by art. 23. par. 2. of the Sports Act.

It is interesting to compare, albeit briefly, the transition of football clubs as member associations into stock companies in Croatia with what has happened in other European countries. The tendency of the transformation of associations into companies of capital in the past years, based on the commercialisation of sports, changes the structures of national and international sports league competitions (Malatos 1988: 65). German professional football clubs are opting to detach the operations of their first teams, so they leave the traditional non-profit association legal format in order to become incorporated companies (Englisch 2005: 46; see the contribution of Daniel Ziesche in this volume as well). Since October 1998, as a consequence of actions by the German Football Federation (DFB),²³ clubs have tried different formats to register as stock companies (*AG – Aktiengesellschaft*), limited companies (*GmbH – Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung*) or limited private stock companies (*KGaA – Komanditgesellschaft auf Aktien*). The peculiarity of the German system is that the clubs – sports associations – do not go for direct

²² Art. 44. par. 3. Sports Act.

²³ The German Football federation (DFB) enacted on 24 October 1998 a major decision known as the so-called *Eckwertepapier* on the possibility of issuing licenses for participation in competition to companies of capital.

transformation of their legal form, but rather establish new companies into which they transfer the whole company as a business share and asset or a professionally working organisation as part of the company organisation and firm.²⁴

The management rights of associations holding shares in sister companies are protected by special legal provisions contained in par. 16 c) of the statutes of the DFB, the so-called 50+1 rule.²⁵ The purpose of this rule is to ensure that the founding association (Parent Company) always holds a majority of voting rights at the assembly meeting of the club, despite the fact that it might hold fewer rights in the ordinary capital itself (Stopper 2009: 414). The limitation of voting rights of private investors onto 50 per cent plus 1 vote is justified in order to maintain the competition balance and protect the sports interests in the continuity of competitors and the development of young players.²⁶

Since the establishment of the Premier League in England, the competition is entirely in the realm of the clubs and they are entitled to choose their own legal form offered by the national legislation, and since 1982 all clubs of the Premier League have been established as capital companies (Pramer 2003). In Italy, France, Spain, and other major European countries, professional clubs, which enjoy wide organisational freedom, often opt for capital

²⁴ The basic ingredient of the firm is the same, only the legal form is changed. The firm of the association is, for instance, FC Bayern München e.V., the company of the stock company is FC Bayern München AG.

²⁵ § 16 c DFB Statute accepted on 25 October 2013, on its national conference ('DFB Bundestag', the federation's legislative assembly)

(1) Clubs in the license leagues, i.e. companies of capital with their licensed players departments and other economic entities will acquire membership in the League association after obtaining the license from the League federation.

(2) A company of capital may acquire a license for the License leagues, i.e. membership within only if the club has the majority of shares in it and also has its own football department, qualified in the moment of applying for this license to participate in a License league. The club (Mother club) is the major shareholder in the company (sister company) if over 50 per cent of the voting rights plus at least one vote is held at the assembly meeting. In a private partnership stock company the Mother club or a 100 per cent owned sister company must have the right to nominate the major partner. Here a voting right of less than 50 per cent in favour of the Mother club is sufficient, if it is secured that in other forms a similar position is guaranteed, as a member of a majority holding sister company. This demands in particular that the major partner has unlimited legal representation and management rights . . .

²⁶ Ibidem.

companies (Pramer 2003). Limitations in regard to the disposal of membership rights in these clubs have not been legally solved in the same way, which has led to a vigorous legal discussion on having control over multiple clubs through membership shares in the past years (Weiler 2006).

The Croatian Sports Act does not permit the 50+1 rule introduced in German professional football, since the law excludes this rule by mandatory provision of art. 23. par. 2. When a club is transformed into a sports joint-stock company it is deleted from the Register of Associations and the impact of supporters regarding management in the joint stock company depends on the percentage of shares the fans have acquired in their club's company. Supporters could establish a separate association with the authorities to execute management rights vested in the shares the supporters hold (something that could be compared to the concept of a Supporters Trust in the United Kingdom); whereas, the volume of these rights depends on the share in the ordinary company capital held by the supporters. So far Croatian supporter associations do not hold shares in 'their' clubs that would grant them any major management rights, even though their statutes show the tendency of increasing their share in this ordinary capital of the sports joint stock company.²⁷ The possibility of supporters associating by contract on association of voting rights in clubs where they hold shares remains more of a theory.²⁸

Supporters' Associations as a Consumer of a Majority Shareholder's Management Rights

Despite such minor participation in the ordinary share capital of the sports joint-stock companies in Croatia, the supporters association of Hajduk Split named *Naš Hajduk* (Our Hajduk) managed to force the

²⁷ See Statutes of the supporters association on <http://www.nogometplus.net>.

²⁸ By such association a pool is established, a separate company of these members, i.e. the major company associating their voting rights in such company. The common goal is to take over the main company. This company is a partnership company.

city of Split, which had become Hajduk's major shareholder with 56,10 per cent share capital, to assign them the right to decide on the election of the management structure. The issue here that remains open is the duration for which the major shareholder will actually waive the rights of management to the stock company and leave them at the disposal of the supporters association. Other clubs that have also been transformed into sports joint-stock companies do not follow this Hajduk model, even though their major shareholders are usually the local authorities of the city in which the clubs are based. These local authorities chose to execute themselves their legal rights of management and ownership over shares according to the Companies Act.

Legally, there are no obstacles for a shareholder to transfer the execution of its management rights to a third party. Thus, supporters' associations to which these rights are transferred collect memberships from its members in the same way in which football clubs collect memberships from its members. The amount of memberships collected in this manner is transferred to the club. In this way, the major shareholder is participating in regular financing of a football club, even though shareholders basically do not have the obligation to financially support the company they own.

Unwillingness of major shareholders (in the Croatian case local authorities) to transfer their management rights is not surprising. Transfer of such rights means that the people running local councils (politicians) forfeit their influence in clubs which are usually important for the local community. The example of Split, however, shows that well-organised supporters (the higher their number, the better) could succeed in their intent to participate in the management of their club, even though the club is a joint-stock company and the supporters do not have a significant number of shares.

Of course, it goes without saying that this concept is not likely to succeed where a private investor (i.e. not the local council) owns the majority of the share capital of a football club. However, it would be prudent for such investors to transfer some of the rights which stem out of the majority of voting rights in a general meeting of shareholders (e.g. a right of an association of shareholders to appoint some of the members of the supervisory board of the club). In this manner, such a shareholder

could motivate the supporters to participate in the management of the club, thus securing club's higher popularity among its supporters.

Conclusion

The analysis of the provisions applicable to football clubs in the Republic of Croatia reveals that there are two very different models of internal legal structure of football clubs. Even though it could appear that the model of a civil association is more 'supporter-friendly', the Croatian experience provides a counter example. Legal provisions governing civil associations are more generalised in its content and allow a high degree of autonomy in structuring the internal organisation of such clubs and the preservation of club members' management rights. Football clubs – civil associations have the possibility to ensure means of democratic and transparent participation in decision-making of its members (supporters). However, the statutes and bylaws of such clubs often do not have such provisions. Quite contrary, clubs are usually more likely to prevent members from efficient consummation of their voting rights.

Football clubs which are incorporated as joint-stock companies do not have the possibility to limit management rights of their members (shareholders) because of the strict legal regime governing capital companies. The problem with these football clubs is the fact that shareholders' management rights (voting right in particular) depend on the participation in share capital of the company. Thus, the authors advise shareholders of such football clubs to join their shares and form an entity to represent them at general meetings of shareholders and secure more significant supporters' (as shareholders) influence.

An example of the above-suggested mechanism of supporters' influence on managing football clubs joint-stock companies is a model where a civil association of shareholders is a majority shareholder of a football club joint-stock company or has a majority of voting rights in a company (the so-called German model). This model combines a clear structure and certainty of norms governing joint-stock companies and the possibility of

the inclusion of a greater number of individual supporters in the decision-making process in a particular football club. One might even say that this model offers, to a certain extent, 'the best of both worlds'. A variation of that would be a model where a majority of shareholders transfers the rights stemming out of the shares owned to an association of supporters who pay a yearly membership to the club thus partly financing the club.

The present state of legislation in the Republic of Croatia allows for both above-suggested 'hybrid' and 'combined' models of governance. The same more or less applies to other countries of former Yugoslavia and South-Eastern European countries with a continental, Central European legal tradition. However, in reality, what is more evident is the unwillingness of the football clubs, regardless of their legal forms, to motivate the supporters to be involved in the management of the clubs they are supporting. The 'Hajduk' example shows that a democratic way of governance of a football club increases the number of the club's members (even though the club is a joint-stock company) and the number of spectators, despite average or rather disappointing sporting results of the club. Clubs governed by these principles combine the possibility of an inclusion of the supporters in the management of the club, and the supporters' possibility of an effective mechanism of internal and external control.

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9

Beyond the Pattern: Corruption, Hooligans, and Football Governance in Croatia

Loïc Tregoures

Introduction

In November 2014, Hajduk Split football club decided to withdraw from a game due to be played in Zagreb against the nine-time-in-a-row champion Dinamo Zagreb, arguing that some of their fans had been denied entrance on the grounds of an illegal black list, usually used by Dinamo management against its own fans with the help of police. This event was a huge blow for the Croatian Football Federation although its President, former legend Davor Suker, dismissed it as irrelevant.

Still, a few days after warmly welcoming its team in Poljud Stadium in Split, thousands of hardcore football fans and ‘normal folks’ took to the streets in Split and elsewhere in the country to protest against corruption and bad governance within Croatian football, the then President of the

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Republic of Croatia Ivo Josipovic even acknowledging that something had been wrong for a long time in the football business in Croatia.¹ This massive demonstration followed another attempt by hardcore fans to attract attention on problems in Croatian football by launching several smoke bombs on the Milan pitch during an Italy–Croatia game on November 16.

These two events show how wide the fans' repertoire of actions is, and how determined they are to have their voice heard regarding what they consider to be bad governance and corruption within Croatian football and the Croatian Football Federation. Hence the question whether one can describe them as asocial movement² is raised.

This is the reason why from the Croatian case, I will try in this chapter to bring some insights regarding the question of football fans' collective mobilisations (Garcia and Welfort, 2015). To what extent can football fan groups, sometimes with bad reputation, claim legitimacy to have a say in football governance? What kind of repertoire of actions do they use to that end (Tilly 1986)? Under which conditions do they manage to mobilise, and under which conditions can they succeed in their struggle?

This chapter studies football fandom and fan groups from a militant standpoint, taking football fans and their causes seriously (Busset 2014) by granting them what Herbert Blumer (1971) calls 'a depth of the cause'. Thus it is not about material, specific and low-level claims such as legalisation of pyros or discount on tickets prices, but rather about transforming not only the way football is thought and sold as an entertainment business, but also the way football can become a laboratory to a new form of participatory democracy in which football fans would be involved.

Due to its specific history throughout the experience of Communism, a recent war and an ending democratisation process, not to mention the existence of important football fan groups for more than thirty years,

¹ Football: le Hajduk Split arrête de jouer pour dénoncer la corruption', *Le Courrier des Balkans*, 26 November 2014 <http://balkans.courriers.info/article26081.html>

² 'The democratic hooligan? Radical democracy and social protest amongst football fans in Croatia', *Balkanist*, 14 December 2014 <http://balkanist.net/democratic-hooligan-radical-democracy-social-protest-amongst-football-fans-croatia/>

Croatia can be deemed a perfect laboratory to analyse, from the perspective of Western Europe in which social mobilisations are more usual and institutionalised, how and to what extent fans can mobilise for a cause in a tougher context.³ Therefore, it is first necessary to focus on the actors this chapter talks about, namely football fan groups, and the Croatian Football Federation (CFF). Then, the global mobilisation (as opposed to mobilisations led by each group on its own) which gathered all the fan groups in Croatia against the CFF will be described and analysed. Finally, from the Croatian case and above, a reflection on a wider fan activism movement in Europe related to the future of the game will be elaborated.

Croatian Fan Groups

The two most important fan groups in Croatia, from historical and numerical standpoints, are *Bad Blue Boys* (BBB) from Dinamo Zagreb, and *Torcida* from Hajduk Split, which is why the chapter focuses on them and their members. Their full-time involvement and mobilisation capacity for their club as a cause explain why the focus will be given here to these so-called ‘extreme fans’ (Hourcade 2008), as opposed to less active ‘random fans’ or sympathisers, be it in their involvement towards their group and their club or in their social practices connected with Italian ultra style and English hooligan style of cheering.

These two groups, similar to others in Croatia, were involved in the war that led to the independence of Croatia (1991–1995), during which many fans were among the first to enrol themselves into the Croatian army to fight against the Serbs, hence monuments in front of numerous stadiums in Croatia.⁴ From a symbolic standpoint, it is often assumed, yet wrongly, that the very famous fight that took place at Zagreb’s Maksimir Stadium in May 1990 between BBB and *Delije* from Red Star Belgrade (Djordjevic 2012) served as a kick off to the war. Another

³ To that extent, Turkey would be another very good case to study.

⁴ The story of Arkan’s Tigers paramilitaries, among whom many hooligans from Red Star Belgrade could be found, is very well known and documented, see Colovic (1999) and Stewart (2009)

incident, the burning of a Yugoslavian flag by Split fans during a Hajduk-Partizan Belgrade game in October 1990, can also be mentioned to that extent (Sack and Suster 2000).

Just before and during the war, *BBB* and *Torcida* would quiet their rivalry in order to unite against the Serbs, be it in stadiums or on the battlefield. However, once the war ended, the rivalry between the two groups boomed again, all the more since it became the only relevant one in a small league with low level and passion. Their long history and ability to cheer for their teams all around Europe, including throughout violence, granted them a huge reputation among fans in Europe, and a rather bad reputation among continental sport authorities, mainly UEFA. The latter regularly puts pressure on Croatian football and political authorities to fight hooliganism, often drawing parallels with Serbian hooliganism. Given the much more political dimension of Serbian hooliganism compared to the Croatian situation, this seems to be unjustified.⁵

The Football Federation

Until he died in 1999, the Croatian Football Federation (HNS), and football in general, had been the toy of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman. This was because of his passion for the game, as well as for propaganda reasons, as the world witnessed during the 1998 World Cup (Brentin 2013). After that, the HNS, under Vlatko Markovic's presidency from 1999, as well as some football clubs including Dinamo Zagreb, were involved several times in corruption, crony capitalism, and match fixing scandals,⁶ for instance in the FIFPro black book on Eastern Europe.⁷

⁵ See 'Hooliganism as a standard measure of the rule of law in Serbia'. *Regard sur l'Est*, February 2014 http://www.regard-est.com/home/breve_contenu.php?id=1480&PHPSESSID=af586d26b055457cf4215ff94b0ef17c.

⁶ 'La dynamite du Dinamo, Cahiers du football <http://www.cahiersdufootball.net/article-la-dynamite-de-zagreb-4622>

⁷ <http://fifpro.org/en/don-t-fix-it/black-book>.

The last presidential election at the HNS in 2010 ended in chaos after former player Igor Stimac was defeated by one vote (25–24) to Vlatko Markovic.⁸ After Stimac contested the decision before a court, it turned out, in the court's decision in 2013, that the winning vote came from a delegate that should not have voted. This manipulation was believed to be the result of Zdravko Mamic's work, the executive vice-president of Dinamo Zagreb and 'behind the scenes boss' of Croatian football.⁹ After he passed away in 2012, Markovic was substituted at the HNS presidency by former legend Davor Suker, a close friend of Mamic.

Context of Mobilisation

Therefore, it can be argued that these two actors, given their background, interests and social practices, belong more to a culture of opposition and conflict rather than to a culture of compromise and negotiation, be it on the part of powerful and immune people ruling Croatian football, or on the part of football fan groups whose ultra culture tends to valorise some kind of *ethic of resistance* towards any figure of football or political authority.

Moreover, it should be kept in mind that Croatia is a rather young democracy with a troubled recent history. Therefore, social dialogue, professionalised and framed social mobilisations from unions or NGOs as well as culture of compromise from the political and economic elite are in general less developed than in Western European countries. This is one of the characteristics of Florian Bieber's concept of 'constrained democracies', coined to describe post-Yugoslav and some post-Communist states (Bieber and Ristic 2012).¹⁰

⁸ <http://www.index.hr/sport/clanak/stimac-porazen-za-jedan-glas-nakon-kaosa-u-skupstini-marko-vic-ostaje-predsjednik-hnsa-/529035.aspx>.

⁹ <http://www.dnevno.hr/sport/nogomet/79873-upravni-sud-ponistio-izbor-vlatka-markovica-stimac-je-trebao-biti-predsjednik-hns-a.html> However, although the appeal went through positively for him, Stimac was most embarrassed about it since the HNS in the meantime asked him to be the Croatia national coach after Euro 2012, in an attempt to sort things out behind the doors.

¹⁰ To the authors, this category also applies to actual EU member states such as Bulgaria and Romania.

One should stop thinking in terms of consolidated and unconsolidated democracies as the *Nations in Transit* ranking does for instance,¹¹ since it implies the idea that every unconsolidated democracy is just in a temporary phase from which they will ‘move to Denmark’ (Woolcock and Pritchett 2002). Bieber and Ristic (2012) argued instead that these ‘unconsolidated democracies’, better described as ‘constrained democracies’, should rather be looked upon as a ‘discreet and stable type of regime’,¹² whose stability relies on deeply rooted political practices and authoritarian exercise of power.

Therefore, although Croatia cannot be strictly compared to Serbia or the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in terms of lack of press freedom or omnipotent government for instance,¹³ it remains that corruption is widespread, that the country is still struggling with the criminalised privatisation process and the crony capitalism from the 1990s, that nationalism is still the general intellectual and political paradigm all the more since former president Tudjman’s party, HDZ, lost elections at the end of 2011,¹⁴ and that social dialogue is still somehow missing.

Still, in the wake of the path dependency theory (Pierson 2000), four decades of Communism, and a decade of semi-authoritarian regime based on war and nationalism mobilisation (Masson 2002) have left an indelible imprint on politics, political parties’ ways of doing politics, topics discussed (and dismissed) in the political debate and in the press, the impact of civil society and social relations in the country. In this

¹¹ <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/nations-transit#.VLZWUSuG-Sp>

¹² Bieber, Florian, *Stagnation or the consolidation of the not-quite democracy in the Balkans*, November 2011 <https://fbieber.wordpress.com/2011/11/25/stagnation/>

¹³ Interestingly enough though, Croatia’s index in the Nations in transit ranking decreased in 2014 to be a bit lower than that of Serbia (see <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2014>). Both are described assemi-consolidated democracies’, while Slovenia is considered to be a consolidated democracy’.

¹⁴ The new president of HDZ, Tomislav Karamarko, took the lead to focus on nationalist topics’ such as the use of Cyrillic alphabet in parts of the country inhabited by Serbs, not to mention the rehabilitation of former president Tudjman, despite his authoritarian rule during the 1990s. HDZ’s victory at the last general elections at the end of 2015 led to the formation of a new government in which several ministers are very contested for their ideological proximity to nationalism and revisionism.

context, there is no such thing as a win–win situation which would be the outcome of a serious negotiation between partners willing to work together, and the same applies to the way football is ruled.

Club Statutes and Democracy

In Zagreb, the struggle against crony capitalism and corruption embodied by Zdravko Mamic is twofold: on the one hand, *Bad Blue Boys* boycott games,¹⁵ or go to games to boo and insult Mamic for 90 minutes while the latter, with the help of police and the HNS, manages to have more and more hostile fans banned from the stadium and even pays loyal fans to fight his opponents.

On the other hand, a group of older and educated fans, helped by former players, created the initiative *Together for Dinamo (Zajedno za Dinamo)* in 2010 in order to raise public awareness about this situation through interventions in the media, demonstrations, an online petition, as well as a legal work with the then political opposition which came to power in Croatia in January 2012 regarding the law on sport and the law on conflict of interests.¹⁶

Their aim is to have the statute of public association of the club respected, namely that the board be elected by members of the association, hence their slogan ‘one member, one voice’ (*jedan clan, jedan glas*, in Croatian), while today they do not have a say on it (given the close relationship between Mamic and Zagreb mayor Milan Bandic). BBB co-created in 2014 a futsal club named Dinamo, not related to the football club of Dinamo, ruled according to ‘one member, one vote’ system. They recently organised an all-star game with former Dinamo players, before more

¹⁵ Especially for *Champions League* games so that all Europe can see and wonder why the stadium is almost empty on a Dinamo Zagreb-Real Madrid or Dinamo Zagreb-ParisSaint-Germain game. See my piece for the website *sofoot.com* <http://www.sofoot.com/mais-pourquoi-le-stade-de-zagreb-sera-t-il-si-vide-pour-accueillir-le-psg-163063.html>

¹⁶ ‘Football: Au Dinamo Zagreb, les supporters veulent prendre le pouvoir’, *Courrier des Balkans*, October 2012, <http://balkans.courriers.info/article20750.html>.

than 3,000 fans¹⁷ while at the same time, Dinamo was playing before 450 people, the lowest attendance ever in the 35,000 seats Maksimir Stadium.¹⁸

In Split, Hajduk fans first created an initiative *Dite Puka* ('our child' in local Dalmatian dialect), which aimed at buying out shares of the club when it was privatised. However, this strategy failed due to disagreements among the leaders. Therefore, Hajduk fans created in 2011 an NGO called *Our Hajduk* (*Nas Hajduk*, around 10,000 members) and led several public campaigns in order, first to impose a code of good behaviour (*Kodex*) in the governance of the club after years of corruption by managers chosen by the Split municipality (Lalic 2012), and second to strongly oppose the sale of the club by the municipality to mysterious American investors (see more details on *Nas Hajduk* in Chapter 7).

Here, a paradox has to be emphasised regarding the statute of these two clubs. Dinamo Zagreb is a public association of the city of Zagreb. Therefore, it should be ruled democratically through and by the members of this association. They should elect a management team which would regularly face new elections, provide accounts of their economic, financial and sport results, present their project for the club and so on. This is what *Together for Dinamo* is advocating, taking Benfica or FC Barcelona as examples. However, as noted previously, this is not the way Dinamo works. In fact, simple members of the association, in other words normal fans, are dismissed from the decision process which eventually remains in the hands of the city council and the city mayor, Milan Bandic.¹⁹ This is the reason why Zdravko Mamic, thanks to his political connexions, happens to be the executive vice-president of the club, while his own brother is the sport director and the first team coach. Moreover, local players coming to Dinamo are very often advised to

¹⁷ <http://www.index.hr/sport/clanak/ovako-izgleda-invazija-boysa-vise-od-tri-tisuce-navijaca-doslo-podrzati-futsal-dinamo/769822.aspx>.

¹⁸ <http://www.jutarnji.hr/srusen-maksimirski-rekord-na-tribinama-450-gledatelja-cuvar-nije-pustio-taravla-i-soudanija-/1219749/>.

¹⁹ Milan Bandic was arrested in October 2014 under corruption accusations not linked to Dinamo. His arrest did not change anything regarding the way Dinamo is ruled, nor triggered early municipal elections.

work with the football management agency run by Mamic's son. Therefore, while Dinamo is funded by municipal budgets, in other words: by Zagreb taxpayers, the Mamic family is making substantial benefits thanks to the club each time a young talented player (Eduardo, Lovren, Modric, Jedvaj, Cop, Mandzukic etc.) is sold abroad thanks to agent commissions and percentages on wages that players have to pay during their whole careers. Eduardo has been processing for years against the Mamic family on the ground that he signed such a contract when he was 17 and did not yet speak Croatian.²⁰ Luka Modric also had troubles with the Mamic family regarding commissions due to him after his transfer to the English club Tottenham Hotspur, which he had to give back to Zdravko Mamic.²¹

On the other hand, Hajduk was privatised in 2008 and debts turned into shares which means that though private, the club still belongs to the municipality of Split as a major shareholder. Local businesspersons and former players also have minority shares in the club. *Nas Hajduk* also has a tiny percentage of shares (less than 5 per cent). Therefore, from a strictly legal standpoint, Dinamo Zagreb is more democratic a club than Hajduk Split, which is a classic private sport company that the Split municipality can sell anytime provided an investor make an interesting offer (for more on this debate and the limits to the real power of fans in Coratian football clubs where city councils are a major shareholder, see [chapter 7](#)).

However, the fieldwork experience shows that the clubs are managed in the opposite way. Though legally democratic, Dinamo is ruled in an autocratic way, whereas on the other hand, though a private company in which fans that are not shareholders do not have a say on paper, Hajduk is managed much more democratically. It can be illustrated through three examples.

First, in agreement with the municipality, *Nas Hajduk* members elect the supervisory board which consists of nine members among dozens of

²⁰ He eventually lost the case (see <http://www.vecernji.hr/nogomet/visi-sud-ugovori-izmedu-zdravka-mamica-i-eduarda-da-silve-nisu-lihvarski-1043733>).

²¹ <http://www.total-croatia-news.com/sport/1013-luka-modric-testifies-against-zdravko-mamic>.

candidates. *Nas Hajduk* elects seven out of these nine members while the municipality chooses the other two. This board then designates the executive president of the club who manages the club, defines the strategy and gives an annual sport and financial report of its activities.

Secondly, in 2012, the city of Split refused to guarantee a bank loan without which the club would go bankrupt. Within some minutes after the vote which was broadcast on TV, some 500 hardcore fans gathered in front of the city council despite heavy rain to protest against the decision. Wisely, one of the mayor's counsellors talked to the fans and promised a new vote two days later. With 3,000 fans in front of the building, the second vote eventually accepted to guarantee the bank loan.²²

Thirdly, in 2013 as mentioned earlier, an American consortium showed interest in buying out the club from the municipality. Accounting for its debts and costs, one has to bear in mind that Hajduk is a financial burden for a public budget, especially in times of economic crisis. Therefore, the city mayor appeared to be keen on selling the club. However, *Torcida* made it clear that nothing would happen without their consent on the ground that '*Hajduk is mine, yours, but never theirs*', referring to foreigners. Thus, the Americans had several meetings with fans, as well as with the mayor, from which fans declared that they would oppose any selling.²³ As a consequence, although being the legal owner of the club and therefore habilitated to sell it, the mayor of Split obliged himself to promise a referendum in case the club would be sold.²⁴ Eventually, the American consortium backed down.

When compared, the rather more successful mobilisations of Hajduk fans in both their goals probably stem from the fact that the club represents a very significant element of regional identity heritage in the Croatian region of Dalmatia, hence the legitimacy recognised by Hajduk fans, more numerous today than their Dinamo counterparts, to mobilise

²² <http://www.curva1899.com/2012/10/chroniques-de-croatie-la-torcida-split.html> and <http://www.24sata.hr/nogomet/svi-na-poljud-split-slusa-zov-torcide-koja-stize-u-pomoc-286173>.

²³ <http://gol.dnevnik.hr/clanak/hnl/amerikanci-se-vratili-i-podebljali-ponudu-za-kupnju-hajduka-306269.html>.

²⁴ <http://www.total-croatia-news.com/sport/1013-luka-modric-testifies-against-zdravko-mamic>

even beyond traditional football fans in order to protect the ‘soul of Dalmatian identity’ from foreign investors, allegedly unaware and disrespectful of this crucial dimension of the club (Tregoures 2014).

Nevertheless, these are local mobilisations of each group, regarding a struggle with the respective club. If *Kodex* can be deemed a model for every club’s governance, and was even praised by sociologists and journalists as a model for other sectors of economic and social life in Croatia to fight corruption (Lalic 2012), it remains that no global mobilisation from fans all over Croatia has emerged to have it implemented in their respective clubs. Hence the question is raised: under which conditions is a global fan mobilisation possible?

It appears that first, an enemy common to all groups is needed in order to trigger the mobilisation. And secondly, some conditions need to be met in terms of timing and repertoire of action which will be developed further on.

A Common Enemy

Is having a common enemy, namely the football authorities, the police, or the government which backs the HNS, enough to trigger a common mobilisation involving all fan groups, regardless of their own rivalries? One would assume that there is yet a crucial distinction that has to be drawn between passive and active mobilisation regarding the repertoire of action at stake.

What could be described as passive mobilisation is in fact the usual, routinised repertoire of actions implemented by fans towards their common enemy, especially during the national team games, in which all the groups usually agree on a truce regarding their rivalries. Indeed, the games of the Croatian National Team are the occasions for fans in a huge number to sing,²⁵ or to show banners against the HNS in particular to denounce its corruption. *Bad Blue Boys*, *Torcida* and other

²⁵The slogan ‘HNS, faggot, you’ve destroyed football’ (*HNS pederi, nogomet ste sjebal!*) is very common on every game.

groups would do it as well every weekend during the respective clubs games,²⁶ but the result is not as powerful and striking as it is when performed during national team games before wide national audience.

These expressions of protests have been regularly witnessed for a very long time. It may thus be asked, even above beyond football, what is at stake with these types of mobilisations which are unlikely to give any concrete result but only provide militant and symbolic retributions, which nonetheless matter (Gaxie 2005).

Let us think about workers' demonstrations every 1st of May for Labour Day. This routine mobilisation is its own end, whereas a demonstration or a strike organised, say, to fight a specific law, aims at having it withdrawn. Therefore, what is missing with routinised mobilisations, whatever the repertoire of actions is, is a specific agenda following which a mobilisation can be successful. The same thing goes for football fans and the evidence of it came after a specific decision taken by the HNS against which ultras from every club decided to react actively.

Active and Successful Mobilisation against an HNS Decision

On October 2013, serious incidents took place during a game between NK Rijeka and Hajduk Split in the so-called Adriatic derby. Although these incidents were mostly due to situational elements, namely police provocations and bad organisation from NK Rijeka,²⁷ the HNS reacted by issuing a decision according to which away fans would no longer be allowed on games unless they were part of an official trip organised by their club. Furthermore, being part of this trip implied that fans were required to buy a special card (voucher), to provide much personal

²⁶ During my ethnographic fieldwork, I happened to be in *Torcida's* end just behind a pornographic and somehow homophobic banner representing Igor Stimac and Zdravko Mamic. The club was sanctioned after that.

²⁷ La violence engendre la violence: qui sont les vrais hooligans en Croatie? *Courrier des Balkans*, Octobre 2013 <http://balkans.courriers.info/article23363.html>.

information, and to come to the club three days before an away game to sign in and pay for the ticket.²⁸ This very restrictive system is largely similar to the Italian *tessera del tifoso* or the Turkish *passolig*. According to testimonies on specialised forums as well as my own contacts among fans in Split and Zagreb, it appears that a global coordination between fans from all over the country was immediately implemented in order to strike back. Although no official statement was issued, information came out in the press regarding fans' determination to circumvent the voucher measure, and prove it both absurd and ineffective as a way to deal with football supporters.

Therefore, the first games following the decision were feverishly expected. To make things even spicier, Dinamo Zagreb was playing the second Split club, RNK Split, a small club with a very low public fan base. Then, *Torcida* of Split managed to buy tickets for this game which they did not intend to attend anyway, in order to sell them back to *Bad Blue Boys* once they arrived in Split.²⁹ In this manner, the voucher measure was made utterly useless. Meanwhile, other *Bad Blue Boys* managed to buy tickets for the Lokomotiva Zagreb-Hajduk Split game in Zagreb, which they similarly sold back to *Torcida* fans.

This first active mobilisation against the HNS decision was thus very successful, and was reproduced all over the country including during games between two rival groups such as *Demoni* of Pula and *Armada* of Rijeka in the Istria derby. However, the most important mobilisations organised by fans took place on December 1 and 17 for the Dinamo-Hajduk and Hajduk-Dinamo matches. Ever since the HNS decision was made public, fans from both sides met in order to turn these specific games, closely scheduled, into a decisive public relations operation, allowing for huge pressure and expectations from the HNS, the police, and even UEFA who was to send some delegates. The first game in Zagreb was thus preceded by calls from *Torcida* and *Bad Blue Boys* to ignore police provocations and to ban any kind of violence before,

²⁸ <http://www.24sata.hr/nogomet/nove-mjere-hns-a-nema-vise-gostujucih-navijaca-u-hnl-u-337053>.

²⁹ <http://www.curva1899.com/2013/10/rnk-split-dinamo-zagreb-600-ultras-de.html#more>.

during and after the game. While police stopped cars coming from Dalmatia on the highway before reaching Zagreb, *Bad Blue Boys* even called their members to give *Torcida* guys a shelter for the night for those who could arrive in Zagreb a day before.

Knowing that *Torcida* fans would come in a huge number, Zdravko Mamic banned the West tribune for which they intended to get tickets bought by *BBB* fans. In addition, he then offered *Torcida* to go to the South tribune, devoted to away fans even without the voucher system, which *Torcida* refused.³⁰ Finally, *BBB* and *Torcida* agreed to share the East tribune, for which *BBB* had tickets. Therefore, for the first time in 20 years, the two rival groups stood by together, first around the stadium before the game, then in the stadium, without big club banners, nor any security cordon between them.

During the game, groups agreed to sing only slogans against the HNS and Mamic (as well as other well-known nationalist slogans), groups answering to one another, under applause of the rest of the stadium.³¹ This active mobilisation was a huge surprise among the police and the press, which commented afterwards how responsible and smart the fans had been in dealing with the HNS measure.³²

Two weeks later, the same scenario happened in Split for a cup game between Hajduk Split and Dinamo Zagreb. *Torcida* managed to buy tickets for 500 *BBB* members in the East tribune, close to *Torcida*'s North tribune, while away fans used to gather in the South tribune in Hajduk stadium. *BBB* could hold a demonstration in Split streets before the game without any incident, and once again slogans against the HNS and Zdravko Mamic were sung for 90 minutes.³³

³⁰ This offer says much on the power of a man able to dismiss a decision taken by the football federation, and deemed crucial by both the government and the UEFA. That the HNS did not react negatively to this offer also reflects some aspects on Croatian football's governance.

³¹ Videos are available on <http://www.curva1899.com/2013/12/dinamo-zagreb-hajduk-split-torcida.html>

³² Live-report of the day <http://www.index.hr/sport/clanak/torcida-i-bbb-rame-uz-rame-na-tribi-nama-pogledajte-navijacki-mars-na-maksimir/714158.aspx> *BBB* and *Torcida* have written a new chapter of our football history' reads this report <http://sportski.net.hr/nogomet/hnl/scena-zapovijest-bbb-i-torcida-zajedno-protiv-mamica>.

³³ <http://www.curva1899.com/2013/12/chroniques-de-croatie-torcida-et-bad.html#more>

Eventually, soon after the winter break ended, the HNS decided to withdraw its decision on vouchers on the ground that it was too complicated to organise for clubs and fans.³⁴ This was deemed a great success by fans all over the country and a consequence of their active mobilisation. Despite the HNS' explanations, it may be argued that they soon realised to what extent their decision had unexpectedly fed solidarity and determination among fans usually torn by their own rivalries. In other words, while they intended to spread their control on stadiums and fans counting on their inability to organise together and respond without violence, the decision backfired at them with a unified fan mobilisation which was becoming more and more legitimate and popular game after game, especially after the two December derbies. Therefore, although this active mobilisation resulted in a drop regarding football violence, the HNS decided to end its experience.

Although the specificities of football governance in each national context shall not be dismissed, it may be argued that from this local experience of active mobilisation, lessons can be learnt on a broader European football fans scale regarding reasons and criteria that make a mobilisation of football fans both possible and effective.

On What Grounds Is a Common Mobilisation of Football Fans Possible?

From the Croatian experience, I would emphasise three crucial and complementary conditions to make a unitary fan mobilisation possible. First of all, a mobilisation³⁵ is possible **when it immediately answers a direct and concrete attack** (or considered this way in a large consensus) against the fans in general, mainly from the football authorities.³⁶

³⁴ <http://www.hrsport.net/vijesti/471043/nogomet-maxtv-prva-liga/hns-priznao-poraz-ukidaju-se-vauceri-za-gostjuce-navijace/HNS> acknowledges its failure: The voucher system for away fans is abrogated' reads the title.

³⁵ By global I mean a large coalition of fan groups united behind the same demands, and coordinating a common mobilisation above their own local issues and rivalries.

³⁶ Instead, a decision taken against a specific club or a specific group will hardly entail a global and immediate high intensity mobilisation. The case of *Bad BlueBoys* and their struggle with Dinamo governance and the HNS is rather clear on that matter: They are on their own.

The voucher decision was made overnight without any dialogue with the fans, which made it possible for them, above routinised mobilisation, to react actively and immediately. Indeed, a mobilisation can hardly take place if it aims at fighting a decision made months or years ago. It has to be a hot topic, highly discussed on forums and in the specialised press in order to maintain a high level of interest and above all a maximal hope of success in the mobilisation.

Second, a it is possible **if it does not last too long**. Indeed, not only is it hard to maintain a high intensity level of mobilisation of numerous actors, but it is all the more problematic when these actors are rivals who used to fight each other. Therefore, if an active joint mobilisation has to last a long time, it is highly probable that it will lose actors and thus get weaker and weaker. Of course, no one knows whether or not a mobilisation will last long, hence a common strategy adopted by authorities is to ignore the mobilisation until it dies by itself because of rivalries, or impatience of rather young fans who would finally be tempted to use violence in an answer to their frustration. This would kill the mobilisation and delegitimise the fans as serious interlocutors. On the other hand, however, a long and high intensity level of mobilisation is possible for groups on their own, on a local level, as is exemplified by specific *Torcida* or *Bad Blue Boys* struggles for better and democratic governance in their respective clubs. In their struggle, they may look at what the others do, but there is no coordination between them.

Third, a mobilisation is possible provided the **repertoire of actions remains rather classic** (songs, banners, street demonstrations) and **the coordination flexible**. It seems indeed all the harder, given the rivalries between fan groups, to keep a joint mobilisation alive if an official association has to be created, juridical actions implemented, a board, a president, and a spokesperson elected. This problem can be considered to be a weak point for fans since a government or sport national authorities, provided they are willing to, have grounds for asking a delegation of official interlocutors to negotiate with. An official structure aimed at having a regular dialogue with authorities (government, federation, TV broadcaster, and clubs' managements and owners) is nevertheless possible once fans' legitimacy as actors and stakeholders of football has been recognised by the aforementioned actors, and all the more probable if social dialogue in general is developed in a given

country.³⁷ However, even if the necessary conditions are reunited to make a global mobilisation possible, this does not mean that it will be successful. Therefore, conditions for success might be highlighted.

Conditions for a Successful Common Mobilisation

As tautological as it may sound, a mobilisation's success first depends on how quickly it can get some first results. Once again, time is essential to this kind of movement since the longer it lasts, the lower the chances are to be successful because of rivalries and fatigue. As a matter of fact, once the HNS withdrew its decision on vouchers, fan groups agreed to end their truce. A few weeks later, dozens of *BBB* and *Torcida* would fight in a motorway station,³⁸ which shows evidence that a global mobilisation can hardly be successful if things do not move forward in the short term.

The first result can be to get the media's attention and sympathy, which is very helpful when football or/and political authorities are unwilling to consider fans to be legitimate and serious interlocutors to discuss with.³⁹ Therefore, winning a negotiation margin, a status of serious interlocutor resulting from an active mobilisation can be the beginning of a second phase. Furthermore, in most cases, getting results within a short term can boost fans' motivation to go ahead.

As a complement, success can hardly be achieved without establishing and winning the battle of public image in the media and public opinion. I would argue that this depends on two main factors. The first one is related to the image public opinion and the press have of football fans and of football/political authorities. In this case, the national context is of great importance. In Croatia, given their history, *Bad Blue Boys* and *Torcida* are very well-known organisations that have enjoyed a good image in 1990, which somehow deteriorated afterwards because of their

³⁷ To that extent, Germany is a good example.

³⁸ <http://gol.dnevnik.hr/clanak/hnl/krvavi-obracun-huligana-kod-otocca-dvojica-tesko-pet-lakse-ozlijedjenih—332073.html>.

³⁹ This situation is the most widespread if we consider the 54 UEFA football federations.

extensive use of violence, especially for *BBB* who, historically and unlike *Torcida*, are more influenced by the English hooligan model than by the Italian ultra model. However, they are still in the public picture as occasional social actors.

On the other hand, Croatian public opinion has a very bad image of its politicians, and is very well aware of how corrupt Croatian football governance is. Therefore, football fans in Croatia would not suffer that much of an image deficit compared to their opponents. This is not so often the case in Europe given how fans are usually described in the media, and given that they are addressed by European authorities (Council of Europe, UEFA, European Parliament) mainly from a security standpoint, as a potential threat (Tsoukala 2010), rather than as football actors able to be part of football governance.⁴⁰

The second factor is related to the legitimacy of the fans' demands in the eyes of the public. Fighting against widespread corruption, against possible abuses related to personal data, or for respectful game schedules is deemed more legitimate than demanding the legalisation of the use of pyrotechnic devices or lower prices for tickets.

Finally, regarding the repertoire of actions implemented, no matter how diverse it is, there is no chance that a mobilisation can be successful if it turns violent. The use of violence would entail an irreparable loss of credibility and legitimacy for the fans who would no longer be able to present themselves as reasonable interlocutors to discuss with. Even though authorities are not willing to negotiate, as is often the case, fans can still win the case through the battle of image, and impose their demands, so long as they impede any of them to use violence, despite decay strategies and police provocations aimed at pushing them to make mistakes and delegitimising themselves. Therefore, the use of violence or at least its acceptance as a legitimate means among most football fan groups is probably their blind spot. In the case, I have developed in this chapter, fan groups all over Croatia, especially the two most important and archrivals agreed to put their

⁴⁰ This tends to change in the last years thanks to the dialogue initiated by UEFA and European authorities with fans organisations such as *Football Supporters of Europe* (FSE) and *Supporters Direct* although their legitimacy to talk in the name of most fans in Europe is questionable.

rivalries on hold, ban the use of violence in order to win the battle of image and have the HNS decision finally withdrawn. Yet just a few weeks later, they were fighting each other again, thus squandering their capital of sympathy and legitimacy, instead of capitalising on it. Thus, it is questionable whether they can once again be successful in a similar case in the future. This is probably the biggest challenge for ultras in the years to come if they really want to do something about the governance of what they would call 'modern football' rather than only routinely denouncing it. The issue of violence puts their own identity and their own social practices in question.

Reflections on Scales of Football Governance

The statute of clubs regarding owners structure in Germany with its 50+1 rule in favour of club members (see the contribution by Daniel Ziesche in this volume for a detailed discussion) tend to validate the idea that the more fans are involved in football governance, the more responsible they will be, and the less they will use violence. Furthermore, this model seems to make clubs healthier, both financially and socially. Therefore, a broad reflection on football's future has to be drawn on different scales in order to address both questions of sport violence from hardcore fans on the one hand, and football governance in the age of globalised capitalism on the other.

To that extent, an interaction is needed between three levels: local, national, and European. Groups can easily mobilise on local issues regarding their own club, and experiment things, but this level can be all the more legitimate and successful since a global dialogue on football governance in which football fans play a role, has been launched as a priority on the European level, be it in the European Commission⁴¹ or within the UEFA in the frame of Financial Fair Play. Then it might be hoped that the accumulation of local initiatives, pressures, experiments

⁴¹ *Supporters Direct* had an observer status in the expert group good governance in sport' established as part of the Council's plan for sport 2011–2014 in order to encourage dialogue between sport actors, the EU and member states. http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/policy_documents/xg-gg-201307-dlvrbl2-sept2013.pdf

and mobilisation on the one hand, and the legitimisation of fans as football stakeholders on a European scale on the other hand will result in national debates which is the most relevant change scale through the law. This is indeed the scale to focus on the statutes of clubs, the scale on which it might be imposed that a certain part of shares are reserved to the fans, or on which it might be imposed that fans should have a say in clubs ruled in a more democratic manner.

Instead, statutes that impose clubs to be private listed companies, create barriers for fans to get involved within the club, mostly due to the amount of money needed to acquire shares.⁴² However, as pointed out by other contributors in this volume, this division between membership based clubs (good for supporters' influence) and stock companies clubs (bad for supporters' influence) is very debatable and has a lot of grey areas, as shown in detail in the contributions by O'Brien, Ziesche or Petrovic *et al.* in this volume).

Some of the obstacles often come from football administrators and club owners themselves. Davor Suker, President of the Croatian Football Federation said himself after the fans' demonstration in Split in December 2014 mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: fans do not have anything to do with ruling clubs, they should cheer for their clubs and that is it'.⁴³ It is thus a circular movement that all in all requires at least two things. First, it is necessary that sport and political actors at each level (UEFA, Council of Europe, European Commission, national football federations and leagues, sport ministers, clubs owners) agree on supporters' legitimacy to be involved in football governance, including in clubs, and take legal steps on the European and national scales in that direction.⁴⁴ Second, it is the fan groups' responsibility to

⁴² Unless they are willing to pay a huge amount of money for a tiny percentage of shares that barely give any right as it is the case in Arsenal.

⁴³ <http://www.vecernji.hr/nogomet/kad-bi-barem-vlada-bila-kao-hns-a-ako-postoji-netko-bolji-prepustit-cu-mu-mjesto-977712>.

⁴⁴ Football Supporters of Europe had obtained from UEFA that a Supporter Liaison Officer be inaugurated in each club as part of the Financial Fair Play from 2012–2013 season. However, according to UEFA officer William Gaillard, France and Azerbaïdjan, still have not implemented this obligation, which does not impede French clubs from playing in European competitions. In addition, there is no guarantee that this SLO is not, accounting for clubs' actual governance, an empty shell.

complete a U-turn from their *ethic of resistance* to a Weberian *ethic of responsibility*, which would question their culture (many groups in Europe still tend to have rather nationalist and homophobic orientations), their social practices such as violence, their repertoire of actions, and their purposes.

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10

Benfica TV: Taking Control of the Communication Process

Fernando Borges

Introduction

The popularity of football, its mediatisation, and global influence places professional football on the centre of the media-sport complex. For the past 30 years, football has been an important source of content for television, being part of a relationship that allows both parts to be highly profitable. Some football clubs grew in size and became global players but their fields of action are still local, leading to governance issues related to the distance with their fan base or community and the influence exerted by media organisations and sponsors over the clubs. Nowadays, digital media is changing the marketplace. The arrival of new players is changing the relations between sports organisations and media

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organisations, creating the need of new business models that can thrive in a competitive market.

Nowadays, one major concern for supporters is the loss of power of sports clubs to media organisations and transnational sponsors due to the high level of commodification and mediatisation of football. Together with the importance of mediatisation, there is a trend of professionalisation at the management level and the search for new and lucrative business models.

As a top-level football club, Portuguese football giant Benfica offers an empirical opportunity to assess these transformations. Based on Benfica TV, this chapter will analyse how important the communication process is for a football club to prosper on this market and what its effect on the club governance is. For the 2013–14 season, Benfica decided to broadcast their home matches themselves, instead of renewing the broadcasting rights contract with a media operator. This change highlighted the importance of communication and media inside sports organisations.

In this chapter, we analyse how communication and media influence the management of a football club. First, we will present a general view of the top football clubs, considered as multinational companies, due to their high income over the past years. Based on our empirical material, we see how Benfica reorganised itself and placed a great deal of importance on the communication aspects of its business. In more specific terms, we will analyse how the creation of Benfica TV is representative of this process, and how this allows a new relationship with their fans. At the end of the chapter, going back to a more general analysis, we will be able to think about how the football industry is managed and to see that the clubs still have room to negotiate and elaborate more autonomous plans.

Methodology

This chapter is based on an ethnographic study of Benfica TV. A week-long observation period was followed by interviews with seven journalists among the 18 that work at Benfica TV. The period of observation was determined by the Benfica TV direction, but the length of research was defined to cover all aspects of the broadcast, including one Benfica

match. Also, to enrich the study, the research was complemented by a document analysis such as annual reports and information published in the media – the size of Benfica and its number of supporters is the reason why it appears so often in the news pages, not only figuring in the sports content, but also in the political and business contents.

Football clubs are highly mediatised institutions. Very often, players and managers are in front of the cameras either by just playing and practicing, or being interviewed. However, the inner parts of the clubs are frequently hidden or at least very well controlled. So, an ethnographic approach allows for a better opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the club, to understand its motivations and how the media production is now part of its universe. Among the strengths of ethnography (Cottle 2007), some are particularly important to this work: participant observation makes the invisible world of media production visible; it reminds us that cultural production is more complex than often imagined; it provides evidence that the media is not sealed from the rest of the society, thus cultural production responds to wider dynamics.

Football Clubs or Multinationals?

Nowadays, to compare a football club with a multinational company is recurrent. The basis for this idea is that the workforce of a football club is recruited in an international labour market of players, coaches, and staff; many sports equipment companies and sponsors are multinationals; some clubs create training grounds outside their home countries; and, in some cases, even the owner's capital is foreign. The economist Andreff (2012: 439) supported that top European football clubs are multinationals, even though they do not make direct foreign investments. The criteria for multinationality are different for service providers and industrial companies, since the internationalisation of their production is not based on physical capital, but on human capital, international financial assets, and transactions in the global market.

This proximity with multinationals was possible due to the commodification of football. In the late 1980s, the liberalisation of the telecommunications market contributed to the creation of new companies. Sport,

especially football, became a very attractive content, playing a major role in the competition between the telecoms. The race for the broadcasting rights made their price go up, significantly increasing football clubs' incomes. The TV money consolidated the commodification of football that had started after the war (Giulianotti 2002) and became the main economic driver of the football business (Boyle and Haynes 2009).

In countries where the clubs were non-profit organisations, they gradually changed their legal status, becoming more similar to traditional enterprises (Drut 2011: 12). Therefore, those institutions characterised by a high level of non-professional directors became able to reward their managerial staff. Today, we witness highly specialised personnel in different areas of a football club, from nutritionists to media experts. According to Gasparini (2000: 95), the arrival of these professionals was the consequence of a differentiation and specialisation process of football clubs. In the end, the clubs went through a process of rationalisation, destined to guarantee a level of predictability and calculability.

Despite the discovery of the corporate world, there is a division of clubs with some organisations being characterised by their hierarchised and market-orientated nature while others resisting the rationalisation and bureaucratisation (Gasparini 2000: 4). For our purpose, we are concerned with the top-level clubs that present a more commercial approach. However, even among these clubs, there are elements that call into question the multinational status of the football clubs: the lack of profitability and the challenge to globalise their product.

Notwithstanding the increasing revenues and the legal status that allows profit generation, it is noticeable that profit is not always the result for many football clubs. Kuypers and Szymanski (quoted in Drut 2011) analysed the four divisions of English professional football between 1978 and 1997, and they found no relationship between the sports results and the financial profit of the organisation. Their big discovery was that, in most cases, the clubs' margins were close to zero and that there was no correlation between profitability and final league position. Drut (2011: 93) replicated the same analysis in France and found similar results.

Based on the sports economy principle and the theory of sports leagues, open league clubs are utility maximisers, instead of profit

maximisers. Dobson and Goddard (2011) argued that throughout the history of English football, profit-making clubs have been the exception and not the rule.

In many cases, profit or pecuniary gain seems unlikely to be a significant motivating factor. If so, it may be sensible to view the objective of the football club as one of utility maximisation subject to a financial solvency constraint. The financial solvency constraint recognises that the benevolence of any chairman or director must reach its limit at some point (Dobson and Goddard 2011: 6)

Based on Sloane (1971), Dobson and Goddard (2011: 7) alerted that the utility maximisation assumption may be rationalised so that it is consistent with almost any type of behaviour. However, in the case of football clubs, they easily identified several objectives, such as profit, attendance, health of the league and, the one considered to be most consensual – the sporting success. Considering that the main utility of a football club is to achieve victory, we may say that the club is, in many cases, a victory maximiser. Andreff (2012: 301) argued that to succeed in sporting terms, the clubs try to recruit the best talents available, and the competition among the clubs increases the salaries, creating a vicious circle with the sales of broadcast rights and debts. Therefore, regardless of the increased revenues, the clubs tend to present a zero sum for their budget, because they transform their money into tools to achieve victories.

Recalling that a football match, in most cases, takes place inside a domestic stadium, usually, for a national league, the globalisation of this product is nearly impossible.¹ However, if we consider the televised match, then we have something that can be commercialised worldwide. This is one of the reasons why broadcasting became the main product in sport. Insofar as sport became an important product for television, football had to adjust to satisfy the needs of the entertainment industry. Formats or schedules should be planned based on how to get more

¹ The Italian and French 'Super Cups' have been played outside Italy and France respectively, and the English Premier League once floated an idea about a 39th round to be played abroad.

ratings for TVs in the same way that the celebrity status of some of the football players is used to attract more viewers.

Regardless of some constraints, by considering top football clubs as multinationals, it is possible to identify three movements at the organisation of football: the professionalisation of directors and administrative staff, finances and business reorganisation, and the mediatisation of sports events. First, by allowing the payment of the club's managerial staff, volunteers and benefactors gave place to professionals who manage sport in economic and marketing terms. Second, the growing importance of TV to sport contributed to a change in the financial structure, from the SSSL (Spectator-Subventions-Sponsors-Locals) model to the MMMMG (Media-Magnates-Merchandising-Markets-Global) model (Andreff 2012: 344). Ticket sales that once were the main source of revenues are now part of a triangle: matchday, broadcasting, and commercial. Matchday revenue is derived from gate receipts, broadcasting revenue comes from the selling of rights, nationally and internationally, and commercial revenues include sponsorships and merchandising. Third, the mediatisation aspect is highlighted by the strong relations that bond media and sports organisations (Rowem 2004) in what some authors call the media-sport production complex (Wenner 1989), and, furthermore, by the initiative of some top clubs to take more control over the communication flow (Boyle and Haynes 2004).

The Restructuring of Benfica

The Portuguese club Benfica is one of the top football clubs that could be classified as a multinational. Despite the fact that they are not in one of the *Big Five* football leagues (England, Spain, Germany, France, and Italy), the club has managed to generate revenues that placed them at the 26th position of the Deloitte Money League 2014 (Deloitte 2014). A general passion for football, sports tradition and the economic size of the country are the parameters that count to place the countries inside the *Big Five* group. In Portugal, Benfica finds the passion for football and a great tradition in the sport, but the economic situation of the country is a significant setback. However, the market share of Benfica compensates

some of these difficulties: it is estimated that 50 per cent of the Portuguese inhabitants support Benfica (Pereira 2012: 188).

Over the past 14 years, Benfica has undergone a big restructuring. In the 1990s, the club became known for cases of mismanagement, loss of properties, and the corruption of directors (Pereira 2012). These misdeeds generated big debts. Around the turn of the century, a new board was elected and, so far, they have been able to resolve these problems. They are still in charge of Benfica today, led by President Luís Felipe Vieira. Benfica left these problems behind, and today the club has achieved economic stability and some sports victories. Benfica TV is an example of how a club is capable of investing in something different and at the same time having financial advantage. The path for success made by Benfica was similar to what we saw earlier in generic terms.

First, Benfica reorganised their administrative structure. Amateur directors who had day jobs and went to the club after hours were replaced by full-time professionals who were recruited for their skills, and knowledge of business and the entertainment market instead of their 'supporterism'. Moreover, Benfica made an effort to pay the debts by making the club more efficient and changing the way in which the football department was managed. In addition, it seized the opportunity of Euro 2004 to build a modern stadium that allowed the club to maximise the profitability of the place by renegotiating the name rights of the stands, building commercial and corporate spaces, thus allowing the income of money not only on matchday but every day of the week (Pereira 2012).

An important aspect of this reorganisation was the creation of the Benfica SAD (Sports Anonymous Society, a legal form similar to a PLC in the context of sport), a company listed on the stock market. The creation of the Benfica SAD was a way to separate the football structure from the rest of the club. Hence, it was possible to professionalise the administration of the football section of the club, maintaining other less profitable sports with their amateur or semi-professional status without putting the club at risk. The Benfica SAD is the proprietor of 100 per cent of the Benfica Estádio Company – responsible for the maintenance and commercial exploitation of the stadium; 100 per cent of Benfica

TV; 50 per cent of Benfica Clinic – a medical clinic that operates for Benfica and the general public; 15 per cent of Benfica Stars Fund – players' transfer fund which was undone after UEFA recommendations; and 2 per cent of Benfica Insurances – an insurance company with Benfica's brand.

Drut (2011: 22) noted that there is no significant sports advantage for a club to be on the stock market, and even in economic terms it is a difficult thing because the club's assets are easily depreciated and very volatile. As an investment, it is also unattractive, because there are other more lucrative stocks. Manchester United was the most successful club listed on the stock market until the Glazers' takeover. In Benfica's case, a positive aspect is the obligation of some level of transparency, since the SAD is obliged to make their reports public and to announce their actions to the Portuguese Securities Market Commission (CMVM, from its initials in Portuguese).

According to the 2013–2014 season annual report (Benfica 2014), the club presented a €14.2 million profit, making that season both a sporting and an economic success. This profit was credited, partly, to the increased funds brought by Benfica TV, however what was more important was the sale of players. For the past years, Benfica has become a club known for developing players and thus selling them to top clubs for a good sum of money, such as Angel Di Maria, Fabio Coentrão, David Luiz, Ramires, Axel Witsel and Enzo Perez, among others. Although economically this might be good news, in general, it must be noted that Benfica still has a considerable amount of debts and interests to pay, and the Portuguese economy is not very vibrant at the moment.

Over the last years, once Benfica reached a safe ground, they were able to develop new projects to improve the managing of the club's image. One of these projects was Benfica TV which, alongside with the Benfica magazine and the club's newspaper, is a communication tool to inform the supporters and the society in general. Another approach to this initiative was the creation of the Department of Conservation and Restoration, intended to preserve the heritage of the club, which led to the construction of the club museum.

In the next section we will analyse the case of Benfica TV to see how it is representative of the three drivers of change mentioned before.

However, despite the importance of the TV, we should avoid being media-centric. The media-related elements are in general more visible, but we cannot forget that if the club had not managed to reorganise the financial structure, they would not have been able to launch new projects. In his book *La pelota no entra por azar [The ball does not go in by chance]*, former FC Barcelona vice-president and current Manchester City CEO, Ferrán Soriano (2010) mentioned the same thing: Barcelona would not be where they are now if they had not achieved a financial equilibrium.

Benfica TV

Benfica TV was the first football club TV in Portugal. It was officially launched in December 2008, after the first experimental broadcast was made on October of the same year. According to the club's annual report the objective was to create a TV channel to interact with the supporters and the club's sports and business activities. Today, it is more than that by becoming a sports channel surpassing the Benfica brand and Benfica's competitions (Benfica 2014). Pereira (2012: 226) argued that the TV channel was the President's vision to improve communications with their supporters and amplify other tools already created. Furthermore, it was a way to internationalise the Benfica brand and add value to what is done at the club. At its origin, more than a way of getting extra revenue, Benfica TV's mission was related to the preservation of the club's memory, considered by the directors an invaluable asset of the club.

At the beginning, Benfica TV was an exclusive channel of MEO operator. It was a partnership between the club and the telecommunication company, yet the club managed everything related to Benfica TV, and their headquarters was at *Estádio da Luz*, home ground of Benfica. The Portuguese telecommunications market is shared by three companies: Vodafone, PT Comunicações (owner of MEO), and NOS (the result of the fusion between ZON and Optimus). Despite the fact that Vodafone is now offering television services, the major players in this sectors are MEO and NOS. In 2008, MEO identified a demand for sports content and proposed the creation of Benfica's channel (which

was already a desire of the club president) as an exclusive feature of the MEO services. When Benfica TV was launched MEO had 55,000 subscribers and today they have more than a million. It is not possible to quantify the role of Benfica TV in this growth, but the number of supporters of Benfica in Portugal certainly helped MEO to achieve this goal.

On July 2013, a new phase began for Benfica TV. First, the Benfica SAD acquired 100 per cent of its capital, and, second, they became a premium² channel and also a part of other TV companies' packages. This change occurred because Benfica decided to broadcast their Portuguese league home matches through their own TV channel instead of signing a new broadcasting rights contract with Olivedesportos, the former rights holder. This alteration was motivated by the notion that the club was not receiving a fair amount for the broadcasting rights – the arguments were that Benfica generated more audience for the matches than their rivals Porto and Sporting, but the contract values were similar; the income was low compared with other markets in Europe; and the club deserved a 40 million euros contract, instead of the previously received 7.5 million (Nobre and Candeias 2012).

When the club decided to broadcast their home matches, the final offer from Olivedesportos was €111 million for a five-year contract. At the end of the first season commercialising their matches, Benfica managed to earn € 28.1 million of gross income and attract over 300,000 subscribers (Benfica 2014). However, the annual report did not present the budget of Benfica TV separately. This being said, after investigating the club's accounts and subtracting the operational costs of the TV channel, the newspaper *Público* claimed that the net profit of Benfica TV over the first year was € 17.1 million (Sousa 2014a), later confirmed by Domingos Oliveira, the director of Benfica SAD, who said that they had an €11 million operating cost (Sousa 2014b). It is a significant rise compared with the previous amount of €7.5 million, but less than the last offer which could generate €22.2 million. If we do

² In Portugal it means that in addition to the basic subscription, anyone interested must pay extra fees for the channel.

not include the players' transfers, the broadcasting gross income (28.1 million) became the main source of income, exceeding the UEFA prizes (22.4 million) and the sponsors (19 million) (Benfica 2014).

More important than the debate about income, our goal is to understand how Benfica TV plays a central role in the communication process and governance issues, and how it is a representation of the three drivers of change at top European football clubs. Giving practical examples, it will be possible to analyse some implications of the new management methods of human resources, a new business model, and the mediatisation of modern football.

In general terms, when you desire to expand your activities and make them more efficient, it is recommended to recruit specialised personnel. When Benfica TV was created, the director in charge of the channel had a long *résumé*, with experience in one of the biggest TV networks where he had been responsible for the development of new content formats and new TV channels. The rest of the team, or at least most of it, was formed by young journalists without much experience in television. A turning point for the channel was when it became premium. Benfica TV recruited four new journalists with considerable relevant experience and with good peer recognition in Portugal: Hélder Conduto, the official voice for the Portugal matches at RTP (the public service broadcast), João Martins, a former RTP journalist, Luís Costa Branco, a journalist at SIC and head of the SOL newspaper in Angola, and Valdemar Duarte, a radio and TV commentator with much experience in Portugal.

The arrival of these journalists was justified by the increasing content at Benfica TV and above all it gave more credibility to the channel. In its early years, Benfica TV was perceived by the critics as having low quality and being too partial about Benfica. It could be expected that the new arrivals would be received in a negative way, however the journalists at the club recognised the need for higher quality of their work and they considered the new fellows to have the proper requirements for the job.

Another interesting thing about the professionalisation process of the club staff is related to the motivation to work. Most of the recruited journalists agreed to work at Benfica TV because it was an innovative project in the country, something that could be a very nice professional

challenge, and also because they were already supporters of the club and passionate about the sport. The 'supporterism' is an interesting factor because the journalists talk about themselves as being part of the team and defend the interests of the club. This creates more motivation to work and make more justifiable the extra work hours done.

It is important to highlight the professional self-image described by the Benfica TV professionals. They perceived themselves as journalists, having to behave according to a professional code of ethics, but the most interesting were their views on their employer: forgetting the fact that Benfica was the object of affection, they considered the club as a big company, therefore they should uphold a certain level of professionalism, recognising their place and function in the structure of the organisation.

As we have mentioned before, Benfica TV changed its business model. At first, it worked as an exclusive channel for a TV operator and then became premium, for a €9.90 monthly subscription fee. This change occurred so the club could compensate for the income for the broadcasting rights contract. The Benfica board considered that the broadcasting of the home matches (15 per season) was not attractive enough to obtain a desired number of subscribers, so they decided to improve the content offered by the TV channel. They have already had the rights for the Greek league and MLS, but they still initiated the acquisition of the rights to broadcast the English Premier League.

The acquisition of the broadcasting rights for the Premier League placed Benfica TV under the spotlight and increased their volume of content, especially on weekends, propelling the creation of a second channel: now there are Benfica TV 1 and 2. On Channel 1 the programme schedule is dominated by material directly related to Benfica because this is the channel that is authorised to be broadcast overseas, while Channel 2 is dominated by the Premier League contents and other sports events not related to Benfica, because the broadcasting contracts are limited to Portugal territory, and Benfica TV 2 is available only in Portugal.

The most indicative aspect of this change was the rebranding of the channel. Benfica TV became BTV in an attempt to detach itself from the club image. The recruitment of new personnel aforementioned was

already a strategic move to boost the credibility of the channel by showing more impartiality that was complemented by the rebranding of the channel. The goal of this change was to diminish the rejection other clubs might have towards subscribing the Benfica TV services. Despite the fact that supporters of other clubs may be interested in watching Benfica home matches, the English Premier League is a very attractive product for the vast majority of Portuguese football fans, regardless of their club colours, which legitimises the attempt to neutralise the Benfica name at the TV channel. It is at the same time a way to respect club differences and a strategy to make it more plausible for supporters of other clubs to subscribe to Benfica TV. It is assumed, although there are no exact numbers to prove, that mainly Porto and Sporting fans are reluctant to subscribe to the channel because they know that by doing that, they are contributing to their rival's financial growth.

Last, it is important to observe the central aspect of mediatisation for a football club. The more tangible point is the financial revenue for the sale of the broadcasting rights and Benfica's decision to broadcast their home matches showed how important that is. Moreover, Benfica TV allows the club to control the process more, including the expansion and internationalisation of their brand. Benfica TV is available in nine countries (France, Luxemburg, England, Switzerland, Cape Verde, Angola, Mozambique, USA, and Canada) and parts of their contents are broadcast in partnership with local companies in Belgium and Brazil, in addition to the service of live streaming in dozens of countries spread through all continents. The international strategy is a key aspect for the life of the club because a survey in 2005 showed that there were 14 million Benfica fans in the world, 5 million in Portugal, 500,000 in the rest of Europe and 8.5 million across the rest of the world (Pereira 2012: 188). Moreover, the expansion of the club's image may influence the commercial area and stadium attendances in a positive manner, because it expands the club base.

Also, mediatisation is a concept introduced by Hjarvad (2008) to explain the influence of media on society. It is a process in which the media logic becomes the norm for several institutions. Based on a study of Danish sports federations, Frandsen (2015) argued that the

mediatisation process has three phases: perception, structure, and behaviour. First, it is perceived that media is an important factor in society. Second, the organisation changes its structure, investing resources – time, money, and personnel – to improve its media capacities. Finally, everything converges in actions and media strategies executed by the sports organisation.

Something that still pends confirmation is the satisfaction degree of the fans who watch their club matches on their own TV club television. Traditionally, true supporters were the ones who went to the stadium at every game, while those who watched on TV were undervalued. This way of seeing things was upheld by football clubs because their main source of income was the matchday ticket sales and they were afraid that TV would undermine the attendances. That was not the case for Benfica this season. The average attendance at *Estadio da Luz* remained the same (Amaral 2014), and, in addition, the TV subscribers now directly help the club. Undoubtedly, these new dynamics create new ways to get club fans involved.

New Relations with the Fans

As the organisation of the club modifies, it also changes the way fans are portrayed. Fans are increasingly seen as customers, and in Benfica's case fans are also TV viewers. The commodification of football placed the supporters closer to the customers, and television was a key agent in this process. Therefore, the distinction between TV viewers, customers, and fans is gradually evaporating. Research has shown that they are not as passive and monolithic as it used to be thought (Gantz and Wenner 1995; Raney 2006). Still there are some interesting distinctions to be made between what is considered to be traditional supporters and armchair supporters.

The stadium-home divide is not sufficient anymore to explain the socialisation of fans, due to the technological transformations in place. If we consider that watching a match at the stadium is a text, to watch it on TV is a form of replacement: on the one hand, the stadium offers the atmosphere, the feeling of being part of a history and a superior cultural capital; on the other hand, the TV offers lesser costs, home comfort, and an environment without violence or climatic changes, though one is

obligated to have the point of view of the TV director. Technological developments contributed to bigger screens, more camera angles, better replays, and slow-motions, elements that prompted some people to consider watching football on TV a better than at the stadium. Viewing at the stadium has long been considered a superior experience, but nowadays spectators want what both worlds have best: experience and abundance of images.

However, this distinction between traditional supporters and arm-chair supporters is being transcended because it is frequently a hybrid consumption of sport (Boyle and Haynes 2009), and one type depends on the other. The television spectacle is complete only when the stands are full, as its appearance, noise, and emotional feedback are essential elements to build the live experience needed to those who watch the match on TV. Thus, the crowd is vital to establish a stronger connection with those who are at home (Rowe 2011). In turn, those at the stadium know their condition as part of the TV show, since they are accustomed to the presence of the camera, which is made clear by how they change their behaviour when in focus. In addition, the stadium experience and point of view is not enough anymore. Supporters now look for replays and different angles, either later at home or at the stadium, helped by new technologies. The existence of big screens at the stadiums and the enhancement on the comfort are the domestic logic at the external ambience (Rowe 2011).

In this sense, the divide between TV and stadium is losing importance. Regardless of the differences, it is not possible to say that there are two separate groups; when talking about a sports public, we are speaking of an audience that is both, at the same time. Furthermore, it is not possible to detach media and sport anymore. Even though there are resistance movements against the commercialisation associated with the mediatisation of football, the resistance is made with media tools and new technological possibilities (Rowe 2011).

The passive behaviour of sports fans and TV audiences are called into question by some reception studies on sports TV programmes (Gantz and Wenner 1995; Raney 2006). The research shows a high level of reflexivity on sports fans. The cognitive, emotional, and behavioural involvement is essential to the sports experience, either at the stadium

or in front of the TV. The relationship with the TV does not make the supporters less active. It is true that there is a significant rise in commercial values, but these studies show a great level of complexity to explain the motivations of watching sports on TV. Frandsen (2008) explained that sport events broadcasting is a form of symbolic texts that relate to the public because of the possibility to construct meanings. Even when people watch sports on TV alone, the production of meaning takes place because it relates directly with the social context, which, in turn, is essential to the identity formation.

In addition to the difference between armchair supporters and the ones who go to the stadium, there is another important distinction to be made in Benfica's case between supporters and a club member. When the President of the club says that the club is its members (Pereira 2012: 174), at Benfica, this difference is not a mere rhetoric: the associated life of the club is very busy. Benfica is not just a football team. There are more than 20 other sports played at the club, both professional and amateur, and also some of their facilities are used for educative and recreational activities such as the swimming pool and the football youth camps. These are some of the reasons why Benfica is the third largest club in the world in terms of membership, reaching approximatively 157,000 on the last count (Nunes 2015). In addition, by broadcasting other sports played at the club, Benfica TV allows other events to be shown on TV, thus contributing to alleviating the hyper-domination of football, which in the process of commodification of sport narrowed the variety of sports on TV (Bourg and Gouguet 2012).

Moreover, Benfica counts with a vast network of *Casas do Benfica* (Benfica Houses) that expands the name of the club through Portugal and the rest of the world.³ These houses function as embassies, offering leisure activities, a space for socialisation, and the sale of club's products and tickets (Sousa 2012). The current board of directors has big plans for the *Casas do Benfica* that consist of standardising the services offered, similar to the franchise industries, where the organisation is unified and controlled by a central headquarters (Pereira 2012: 186).

³ <http://casas.slbenfica.pt/>.

This clear commercial drive to the modernisation of the *Casas do Benfica* is also evidenced in the way that fans are treated. More than the emotive reward of being a club supporter, the Benfica board of directors wanted that being a member of the club also represented a rational choice (Pereira 2012: 176). As a consequence, they created the *Kit sócio* (Member kit) that offers discounts on some services and opened stores all over the country in addition to Benfica's merchandise products and tickets.

Using a business terminology, Benfica established football as its core business, so the positive results are measured by the success on the field rather than the budget sheet (Pereira 2012: 156). According to this business model, supporters (or more precisely the club members) are at the centre of the process, not just in rhetoric but in economic and political terms. First, as a member, the person is given the opportunity to vote in the club's elections, playing an active role in the institution's future; and second, as a consumer, the person's actions directly influence the club's finances and the possibilities that this brings.

Since the communication aspects are the main concern of this work, Benfica TV is a tool to place the supporters, or the TV viewers, inside the life of the club. The channel programming allows the fans to be informed on the youth academy, on other sports played at the club, it gives voice to people who live the everyday life of the club, and in some cases, gives voice to the fans who participate in some of the Benfica TV shows. The Channel serves as a way to make known what goes on inside that club and at the same time it praises the work accomplished. If we consider the universe of millions of supporters spread over the world, or even just considering Portugal's sample of fans, this media serves as a means to connect a community that because of its size would not be able to be linked otherwise than through the media.

Managing the Football Industry

When trying to analyse how the football industry is managed today, one's attention is drawn to the proximity it has with the entertainment industry. David Hesmondhalgh (2002) argued that sport is not part of the cultural industries because it has a competitive component and the

unpredictability of the results is not in accord to the way stories are told by the entertainment world, since they are rehearsed and scripted. However, football is a key content for TV, one of the leading players of the cultural industries.

This relationship between TV and sport places the entertainment companies at the centre of the media-sport production complex, due to the possibilities of multimedia, vertical, and horizontal integration (Ginesta 2011: 145). More than multinational companies, Ginesta (2011: 163) defended that big football clubs such as Real Madrid and Barcelona, which present over €400 million revenues, compete for the same market as entertainment companies. In addition, they present a new model of entertainment industries, because in addition to the sports spectacle (a football match, exported and mediated to the world), they offer complementary products to this show which have high levels of symbolic meanings, allowing the supporters to express their passion at the everyday level.

Even though there are differences, the similarities are also noticeable for the managers and directors of top European clubs. Some years ago, Manchester United recruited a Disney executive to work for the club.⁴ The close relations with Disney were also pointed out by Soriano (2010: 22) because of the importance of marketing and merchandising sales growth, which makes us question how the football industry should be managed. Comparing football and cultural industries, what draws most attention is the way the business is planned and structured. Hesmondhalgh (2002) explained that market fragmentation led the companies to organise themselves in conglomerates so they could build synergies and verticalise the production in order to maximise profits. Benfica TV allowed the club to complete most of the chain of production: youth academy, managing the stadium, the sales of merchandise products, and broadcasting the games, creating whenever possible synergies between the club's departments.

The proximity with the entertainment industry highlighted the importance of symbolic elements, leaving important room to the

⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2003/dec/23/7>.

development of marketing and branding strategies to the world of sport. Also, the alteration on the financial model of football, placing more importance on mediatisation, amplified the globalisation of sporting brands. Over the last years, football clubs saw branding as a way to reinforce the emotional connection between clubs and supporters, transforming it to a competitive advantage – the brand is a promise of coherence and continuity of products and services (Desbordes and Richilieu 2011: 11).

For a good brand positioning, a club must identify their consumers well, and differentiate itself from other sports brands and leisure options. This differentiation is vital to justify the expense on one club rather than others. Also, by having a strong brand, with solid connections to their fans it is easier to implement new strategies and some misconducts are easily forgiven due to the love for the club. Therefore, Desbordes and Richelieu (2011: 23) concluded that branding management is important to professional sports because it offers the way to merge the manager's rational and economic objectives and the passion and emotional motivations of fans.

Communication is a vital aspect of branding. The club must send its message to fans in order to build its image and pass on its ethos. When people share the same values, the bonds that unite the community become stronger. When a football club develops its own media, it is a way to spread its voice and a channel to direct communication with fans. Club history, victories, daily routines, and activities serve as symbolic material to establish a dialogue with the club's fan base and build its brand.

As we saw before, the experience is an important element to the consumption of the football match. Sports performance is an essential attraction of the spectacle, but it is added to other elements to enhance the experience of consumption: big screens, Wi-Fi, combos with other products, and more. Supporter experience is not limited to the match-day. It is extended to the after match, or the preparation to the next match, thus the media offers a key element to the supporter's life, providing information about the previous or next match.

Club media is also an important tool to the relationship with customer-supporters. According to Desbordes and Richelieu (2011: 153), a

good relationship with the clientele is based on knowing how to target, attract, and maintain the clients and represents a key factor to success. To build and develop relationships with clients is a challenge, even more when a company has thousands, at times millions, of customers with whom the communication can be made in numerous ways. Also, due to the existence of different kinds of supporters and their multiple ways to get involved in a football club, the authors argued that it is better to invest in current supporters, instead of trying to attract new ones (Desbordes and Richelieu 2011: 144). Therefore, it is possible to use new marketing techniques and new ways to communicate without putting aside the die-hard supporters.

Conclusion

After this analysis, is it possible to know if football clubs have more power? Lately, the concern with football is about their autonomy in relation to sponsors and the media, as much as the distance between clubs and their fan base or community. It is true that mediatisation has created a triangle involving sport, sponsors, and TV (Boyle and Haynes 2009) with very powerful links among the parts. However, the ISL⁵ crisis and the Kirch Media group bankruptcy raised a red flag for top football clubs, and the urge to increase their income motivated them to tighten the control over the flux of communication and manage their own image (Boyle and Haynes 2004). This was exactly what happened to Benfica: dissatisfied with the values offered to renew the broadcast rights contract, the club decided to take broadcasting into their own hands, based on the previous four-year experience with Benfica TV.

Supporters' concerns that the club is money-orientated and presents high levels of commodification may be counterweighted by the economic theory of professional team sports. According to this, open league clubs are more often utility maximisers, instead of profit maximisers,

⁵ International Sport and Leisure (ISL) was a Swiss sports marketing company that was closely affiliated with FIFA.

than closed league clubs. Although systematically increasing their revenues, professional European clubs use this money to recruit talent in order to achieve better sporting results, so it is usual to see that clubs do not often present profits (Andreff 2012). Thus, increasing their revenues is a way to compete with other clubs for better players.

The greater level of control over the production allows the club to shape their final product easily. Therefore, Benfica may create a more suitable atmosphere which is so important to the experience of football, and also they may build the club brand more autonomously, being able to place themselves closer to the final customers, formerly known as supporters. Fans continue to be important for the dynamics between clubs and the advertisers, but if football clubs manage to strengthen their position by the diversification of revenue sources, they will be stronger when negotiating contracts and making choices. In addition, if they manage to have revenue sources emanating from the fans, they will have a more solid base, because investors take out the money when the investments are no longer profitable, while supporters are more loyal.

On December 2015, Benfica signed a new three-year broadcasting contract with the NOS. It may be renewed for 10 years, reaching €400 million, or the €40 million per season desired by Benfica. The particularity of this agreement is that 75 per cent of the payment is for the exclusive broadcasting of Benfica matches and 25 per cent for the broadcasting of the BTV. At the present, neither the telecom company nor the club explained how it will be done regarding broadcasting, leaving for speculation if the Benfica home matches will be shown on BTV or in another channel, due to the fact that the NOS is a telecom service provider rather than a TV Channel. From this deal, we are able to see that TV is still a key player in the football industry.

The Benfica case shows that when a club puts into practice a more marketing and professional approach, looking for new business models, it does not necessarily mean that fans will be completely alienated from the club life. By taking control of the communication process, the club is able to be more influential in the mediatisation of sport and to connect more efficiently with different types of supporters of different levels of participation. In this way, communication strategies are like a classic

No. 10 player: a midfielder with creative skills and capable of connecting different sectors of the team. The player needs to reduce, and ideally eradicate media dependency, creating new forms of income so that the club is able to free itself from the broadcasting rights contract. Beyond that, the investment in the club's own media allows a direct communication with the fan base that can be classified as an imagined community, in academic terms, or stakeholders, in a business vocabulary, increasing the proximity among them.

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11

Between Civic Engagement and Politics: A Case Study of Bohemians Prague 1905 Supporters' Trust

Dino Numerato

There were 7,500 people at the opening game of the Third League against Slavia Prague B-team. Although we lost 1–0, no one left [the stadium] at the end of the game. Everyone was standing and chanting 'long lives Bohemka'. Thinking about these moments, I am still getting goose bumps. A lot of us had tears in their eyes. A half year before, no one would have believed that something like this could ever happen.

[From an interview with a DFB founding member,
15 April 2014]

In this chapter DFB stands for *Družstvo fanoušků Bohemians*, the Czech name of the supporters' trust of Bohemians Prague 1905.

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Introduction

These words describe the atmosphere of the game played in Czech's Third Division on 7 August 2005 between Bohemians Prague and Slavia Prague B team. Before the game started, fan representatives had donated to the club a cheque worth of 2,800,000 Czech crowns (around 102,000 EUR)¹. This amount of money was raised by the fans to pay off money owed to creditors. Thanks to the successful money collection and negotiations with creditors, the supporters headed off the threat of the disappearance of the traditional Czech club in the year of its centenary. The threat was due to financial debts accumulated by the club's mismanagement and financial irregularities. The club fell down into insolvency and was relegated from the Second to the Third Division (Bohemian Football League). The handing of the cheque happened around six months after the symbolic funeral that the Bohemians Prague supporters – who '*have not seen any light at the end of the tunnel*' (Pivoda 2007: 104) – organised on the occasion of the winter tournament, Tipsport Cup, to bode farewell to their beloved club.

A spontaneous initiative labelled SOS *Klokan* [SOS Kangaroo- in reference to the kangaroo in the logo], was soon turned into a more formal step and resulted in the foundation of a supporters' trust, or, more specifically, a cooperative called *Družstvo fanoušků Bohemians* (DFB). The foundation of the DFB was not only decisive in covering the existing debts and keeping the Bohemians Prague club alive. Alongside the club management, the supporters' trust also helped to face primarily two crucial challenges: first, the relocation away from the traditional stadium, Ďolíček; and second, the struggle over the legal usage of the name Bohemians and its logo. The struggle over

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these objectives has been supported by different strategies and tactics that spread from contentious activism to mainstream politics.

The story about supporters that rescued their own club in financial difficulties does not represent a novel issue. Dozens of similar cases have recently been documented in the United Kingdom (e.g. Northampton Town F.C. or Swansea City A.F.C.), Spain (e.g. Real Oviedo or Recreativo de Huelva), and Italy (e.g. Taranto F.C. 1927 or A.S.D. Sambenedettese Calcio). However, the scholarship on supporters involvement has until now been rather limited (García and Welford 2015), sometimes providing a rather insider perspective with a lack of critical stance (Martin 2007). Furthermore, the studies published in English focused primarily on the UK reality. Among the positive assets of fan involvement were identified the following capacities: to attract funding, including emergency situations (Hamil et al. 2000), to build and maintain relationship with local communities (Barber and Williams 2002; Burnham 2000; Lomax 2000), to bring into clubs governance rationality and positive supervision (Culture, Media and Sport Committee 2011; Supporters Direct; Europe 2012) or more broadly, to contribute to more democratic and accountable decision-making processes (García and Welford 2015). However, not always is the potential in the mentioned areas fulfilled considering the limited impact the fans have in decision-making processes at club governance level (e.g. Brown 2007; Cleland 2010; Hamil et al. 2000; Kelly et al. 2012; Millward 2012). The limited impact of supporters' trusts was explained by the questioned legitimacy due to low socio-economic, demographic, gender or educational representativeness of trust boards (Malcolm 2000; Martin 2007; Nash 2001) and by the related majority – and therefore significance – of passive supporters (e.g. Cleland and Dixon 2014). Furthermore, from the perspective of critical political economy, the potential of supporters' trusts to work as a community asset can be undermined due to a strategic incorporation and co-optation of trusts by football clubs and neoliberal policies (P. Kennedy 2012; D. Kennedy and P. Kennedy, 2007).

Against such a backdrop, by focusing on the geographically unexplored reality of supporters' trust in the semi-peripheral football culture of the Czech Republic, this chapter critically examines the main socio-cultural facets of fan engagement and its impact on clubs governance. The Bohemians Prague 1905 story can empirically inform the scholarship on

supporters' trusts in two main aspects: first, by providing the insight into the underexplored geographic reality of the semi-peripheral football culture where a supporters' trust is not founded with the objective to contest hyper-commodified football culture; and second, by analysing the extension of fan engagement from the sphere of football to the sphere of politics.

The data that underpin the analysis are drawn from a variety of primary and secondary sources available online and offline. First, in total 12 semi-structured interviews with supporters and Bohemians club officials have been carried out. Second, in total 16 hours of non-participant observation during social gatherings, municipal council meetings, club events, and football matches have been carried out. Third, the research is further informed by a secondary analysis of documents. More specifically, newspaper articles from key Czech dailies that continuously covered the Bohemians story were selected (Deník Sport, aktualne.cz, idnes.cz) on the basis of full text search by key words (Bohemians or Bohemka, and 'Družstvo fanoušků', 'Desítka pro domácí' or Ďolíček). Newspaper articles were further complemented with blogs, Internet discussions, and websites that were selected on the basis of snowball sampling (and some of the online resources were identified during the offline research), with an aim to achieve empirical saturation.

The next section will describe the main milestones of the Bohemians Prague fan engagement. The sections that follow will then present the main facts and milestones surrounding the Bohemians Prague story and explore the socio-cultural aspects of fan engagement. Finally, the supporters' impact on club governance is discussed.

The Bohemians Prague Story in Brief: Facts and Milestones

In April 2016 the DFB counted 2,170 members² though out of these only some dozens are active. The DFB currently holds 12.38 per cent of shares of the club which is 2.14 per cent more compared to the DFB origins

² The members also count a Czech football club, FK SIAD Most, and the fan club of one of the rivals from Prague, Fanclub Viktoria Žižkov. The DFB was joined by members from Germany, United Kingdom, the United States, Denmark, and Austria (Virtuální Ďolíček 2014).

(Kotáb 2010). The DFB is not totally separate from club management, although the DFB does not have any board position granted by the Bohemians Prague 1905 statutes. Some employees of the club are also trust members, the vice-chair of the executive board is a representative of the DFB, and the trust has always been personally represented in the supervisory board. Notwithstanding the DFB's minor financial involvement in the club ownership and an absence of formally defined rights in the charter, the community of supporters has a certain level of access to the football club governance. The former CEO in 2014 considered the situation to be 'an institutionalised form of fan influence on the club governance' (Interview, 8 April 2014).

Fan engagement at Bohemians Prague 1905 has apparently declined since the salvation of the club in 2005. However, recently arising matters pushed its role beyond a mere 'shareholding supporters' club that mainly handles travel and security matters' (Supporters Direct 2009: 39) as suggested in the Supporters Direct report that was based on interviews from January and February 2008. Since then, the DFB has stepped into a new phase of its existence related to the protection of their traditional home ground, *Ďolíček*, and a new wave of involvement, although less intense in comparison to the period of club salvation, emerged.

Since the very beginnings, the DFB board did not only face the threat of financial, but also legal survival. In particular, the right to use the Bohemians name and the traditional kangaroo logo was questioned. These matters are related to the circumstances under which the club was rescued. The seismic period of changes surrounding the administration of FC Bohemians Prague in 2005 gave birth to three parallel Bohemians clubs.³ The DFB fans actually did not immediately become shareholders of the club in administration but they used another club, AFK Vršovice, as a vehicle to revive the Bohemians Prague 1905. AFK Vršovice had been the name of the club since 1905 before it was renamed Bohemians Prague in 1927.⁴ AFK Vršovice was newly

³The existence of three Bohemians was quite symptomatic for the era of financial and legal uncertainty in the post-Communist Czech Republic that also involved football governance (Duke 2011).

⁴The club AFK Vršovice was renamed Bohemians after the tour in Australia in 1927. Before its return to Czechoslovakia, the club representatives were awarded two live kangaroos and the picture of kangaroo since then appears in the logo of our club. Also, since then the club kept the name Bohemians that was firstly used for the purpose of the Australian tour instead of its

founded in 2005 by two Bohemians fans who bought the rights and liabilities from the bankruptcy trustee. AFK Vršovice and DFB signed a memorandum of cooperation and the Football Association of the Czech Republic (FAČR) in May 2005 recognised AFK Vršovice as the follower of the former FC Bohemians Prague. The following month, AFK Vršovice was renamed Bohemians Prague 1905 (Bofor.cz. [n.d.](#)).

In addition to the Bohemians Prague 1905, two other clubs claimed to be the legal inheritors of Bohemians. First, there was FC Bohemians Prague, the relict of the old Bohemians Prague that went into administration. The representatives of this club claimed to own the shares and account receivables of the traditional club and contested in numerous court trials and accusations the way in which the rights were transferred to AFK Vršovice, or Bohemians Prague 1905 respectively. The club started to play in local Prague competitions in 2009 but has progressively disappeared from the map of Czech football competitions; the Executive Committee of the FAČR decided to cancel membership from 1 July 2012 to FC Bohemians Prague due to its insolvency (ČTK [2012](#)). Second, there was FK Bohemians Prague that was founded by an entrepreneur Karel Kapr who bought a small suburban club FC Střížkov Praha 9. He rented the logo with kangaroo from the TJ Bohemians Praha, a Sport Union whereby the governance was separate from the football club and associated different sports clubs under the Bohemians name. After renting the logo with kangaroo, the FC Střížkov Praha 9 was renamed FK Bohemians Praha. Following court decisions made at several instances, the Executive Committee of the FAČR in January 2013 ordered FK Bohemians Praha not to use the name Bohemians anymore. However, this step was not implemented. The affair with the name and logo was reopened in February 2016 when, following the action of FK Bohemians Prague for the failure of justice, the Municipal Court of Prague permitted the use of both the name and logo to FK Bohemians Prague (Harnoch [2016](#)). In 2015/2016 season,

official name AFK Vršovice; the team actually represented the Czech football. For the sake of completeness it should be added that AFK Vršovice was not the original name of the club either that was in use since 1905. The original name of the club was SK Kotva Vršovice (Pivoda [2007](#)).

FK Bohemians Prague played in the Prague Championship, which is a fifth-level league in the Czech Republic football league system. Notwithstanding the sporting successes of the club that would qualify FK Bohemians Prague for the second-level league in the Czech Republic, the Czech National Football League, the FK Bohemians Prague owner, Karel Kapr, decided to opt for the Prague Championship only. This symbolic step represented a criticism of the length of the legal procedures and ‘undignified’ atmosphere in the Czech football.⁵

Practical implications of this struggle can well be exemplified by the transfer of the former Bohemians player Jan Morávek who went to Schalke 04 for a fee €2.25 million in March 2009.⁶ Bohemians Prague 1905 took an advanced payment for the transfer claiming to have verified the legal correctness of this step. However, even several years after the transfer, the German club suspended the payment of the remaining part of the fee because its representative did not know to which of the Bohemians club to pay (Mádl 2012). The long and complex process over the legal heritage of Bohemians was partly resolved in November 2013 when the Executive Committee of the FAČR decided to acquire from the FC Bohemians Prague the shares and account receivables and to assign them to Bohemians Prague 1905. The amount of money for this transaction remained officially secret.

In addition to the struggles over the material and legal existence, the supporters struggled to keep for Bohemians their traditional stadium, Ďolíček. The history of the stadium dates back to 1932. The aim to ‘save Ďolíček’ was stated in the programme statement of the DFB in 2005: Bohemians must play League Football in Ďolíček’ (Bofor.cz. 2014a). The objective of the Ďolíček campaign was to prevent its demolition and its use for corporate interests, as was suggested by the majority owners of the stadium that controlled it either directly, or through subsidiary

⁵ The FK Bohemians Prague owner Karel Kapr explained his decision in the following way: ‘After 23 years in the Czech football, I have lost the motivation to operate in the environment where the rules are not followed. [...] FAČR does not follow the rules, the social climate in our football is bad and undignified.’ (Bohemiansfc.cz. n.d.)

⁶ This amount roughly represents the annual budget of Bohemians Prague 1905.

companies, Bohemians Real a.s. and CTY group respectively (Bofor.cz 2014b).

The topophilia sentiments are well expressed by a big inscription painted on the terrace that hosts the signing section: 'We will not give up Ďolíček. Ďolíček, more than a stadium' and can be illustrated by the banner remembering that 'Every City has its own symbol'. The banner was exposed by Bohemians fans during their march before the derby with Slavia Prague on 5 April 2010 and juxtaposed Ďolíček with the Statue of Liberty, the Pisa Tower, the Big Ben Tower and the Eiffel Tower. The big protests surrounded the decision of the club management moving from Ďolíček in the 2010/2011 season and playing home games in Eden Stadium of the traditional local rival, Slavia Prague.⁷ After having unsuccessfully used different strategies and tactics that varied from protests, boycotts, manifestations, banners, to lobbying, and more or less formalised participation at decision-making processes at the club level, the supporters complemented the contentious activism with a rather uneven step; they founded the political movement *Desítka pro domácí* (DPD) with the main particular interest to save Ďolíček.⁸ The fans decided to struggle over Ďolíček politically, to participate in municipal elections and in case of success to convince the municipal council of the Prague 10 district to acquire the stadium in order to prevent its demolition. The political movement was founded together with Slavia Prague supporters, the historical rival from the same city district, Prague 10. The Slavia stadium, Eden, is located only two tram stops far away from Ďolíček Stadium. Two interconnected reasons that involve both cooperation and conflict between Slavia and Bohemians

⁷ Hundreds of supporters refused to attend home games at the stadium of the historical rival. However, this radical standpoint was not shared across the overall supporter base and some supporters did not perceive Ďolíček to be the only and unique possible home ground for the Bohemians club. Some observers hyperbolically suggested that the decision to play in Eden in the 2009/2010 season put the knife into the Bohemians unity' (Bofor.cz 2014a).

⁸ The name of the political movement can be literally translated 'The Ten for the Home Team'. This name actually comprises a dual meaning. The term *Desítka*, meaning ten, is used in a Czech football colloquial language to denote a penalty kick. In this regard, ten means a penalty kick for the home team. The number ten in this case is also related to the specific area of Prague Prague 10 where the Bohemians Prague stadium is situated and where the political movement stepped into the municipal politics.

supporters can explain this joint initiative: first, fan solidarity that goes beyond club rivalries and respects the fans right for their own traditional stadium; and second the unwillingness of Slavia Prague supporters to share their stadium with their key 'enemy' and traditional rival and parallel refusal of Bohemians supporters to play in Eden Stadium.

The movement was successful in the 2010 municipal elections. The DPD obtained 7.88 per cent votes and three seats in the municipal council. As an intermediate and primarily symbolic step, the fans put through the renaming of the tram stop close to the stadium into Bohemians (Hrábek 2012). During the four-year engagement in politics, the supporters managed to push Ďolíček forward to the main political agenda. The municipal council of Prague actually approved the acquisition of Ďolíček from its current owner, Bohemians real a.s., by exchanging the stadium for the nearby parking area and paying off the additional fee to cover the difference in price. However, considering that this acquisition exceeds defined financial limits, the exchange needed to be approved by the City of Prague Council. Political animosity and competing political representations at the local Prague 10 and the City of Prague levels prevented the successful conclusion of the deal. The City of Prague Council originally did not approve the planned exchange without providing any decision in a legally defined 45 day-long period. This does not mean that the City of Prague Council was against the idea of the Ďolíček Stadium becoming a municipal property. However, the City of Prague Council suggested a direct acquisition of the stadium rather than the exchange for the nearby real estate. This solution has explicitly been refused by the majority owner of the stadium who in a politically sensitive period surrounding the municipal elections in 2014 threatened to sell the stadium in case of the exchange not being accomplished (Mádl 2014). The Bohemians and Slavia supporters stood unsuccessfully as candidates in the October 2014 elections to politically struggle for Ďolíček in 'the second half-time' to further directly influence the political decision-making process. However, the fans in collaboration with the club management intensified their engagement and pressure on the political representatives of the City of Prague. At the end, the City of Prague Council approved the acquisition of Ďolíček in March 2016 (City of Prague 2016).

DFB and Socio-Cultural Facets of Support

The DFB provides the club with substantial support in the following areas: material and financial support, knowledge and expertise, creativity and ideas, community involvement, and social networks.

First, the DFB supports the club materially, putting at disposal manual labour and financial contributions. As regards manual labour, the DFB organises volunteering days aimed at carrying out maintenance works at the stadium and its surroundings. The current chair of the board recalled voluntary work during the season, in which the club was temporarily relocated away from the Ďolíček Stadium to play at the Slavia Prague Eden Stadium: ‘the first voluntary work was almost illegal as we had to climb over the fence to get to the Ďolíček Stadium’ (Interview, 10 February 2014). Fans helped to cut out poplar trees surrounding the ground, they installed the barbed wire around the stadium to prevent illegal entrances and they participated in common maintenance tasks such as painting and cleaning.

As regards financial support, the supporters raised more money on different occasions after saving its club. The DFB initiated campaigns that enhanced the financial sustainability of the Bohemians Prague 1905 football club. In particular, two initiatives are worth mentioning. The DBF introduced a modest fee for recyclable plastic glasses that serve to sell beers during matches. The fee can either be claimed back when giving back the glass, or given to the club by throwing the plastic glass in special boxes. This initiative raised almost CZK 200,000 (c. €7,400) within one year (Bofor.cz 2014c). As part of another campaign ‘Every crown will warm up’, the DFB also helped to raise almost CZK 1 million (c. €37,000) to finance an under-soil heating system. It is worth mentioning that the capacity of supporters to attract money triggered unrealistic expectations of the club management who asked fans if they could ask for a loan on their own to back up club investments. This suggestion was unanimously refused by supporters who considered it too risky and thus drew the boundaries of their support. As one of the board members put it: ‘We cannot take a loan for ten million for four years. This is simply not realistic’ (Interview, 3 April 2014).

Second, the fans are vital for the club in terms of knowledge and expertise that they provide. As one of the DFB board members self-ironically noted: 'Except for me in the cooperative board, everyone is smart. I am the only plumber here' (Interview, 10 February 2014). Even a quick glance at the formal style of campaigning suggests that fan engagement keeps some track of professional footprint. Since 2005, the DFB board has changed three times and involved among others politicians, lawyers, advocates, an IT expert, entrepreneurs, managers, a journalist, a marketing and a PR specialist. Knowledge of marketing and IT was decisive in promoting specific campaigns, as was the expertise in journalism. These experts are considered to steer, amend, and rectify ideas articulated by the broader fan base. As one of the current board members emphasised, the DFB 'can take advantage of a free legal service' (Interview, 10 February 2014). Third, the DFB has also constantly provided symbolic and consequently social and emotional support that has cemented the 'Bohemians family'. The intensity of the community atmosphere in the period when the club was saved is well illustrated in the following comment made by the originator of the DFB:

'I would compare that period with one atmosphere only: the atmosphere of November 1989 after the anti-Communist *Putsch* when the unity of people and the hope of non-mendacious tomorrows were so strong that people were kind to each other, friendly. [...] And this had obviously not lasted too long ...' (Interview, 15 April 2014)

The last part of the comment also suggests that the atmosphere of cohesion cannot be idealised and that the unity established *vis-à-vis* the threat of club disappearance has not lasted forever, being most intense in the period of the DFB foundation. Notwithstanding the weakened spirit of the community, the fan engagement is still quite strong not only within the Czech context, but also within a European context. Fans also organise fundraising concerts, remembering games, and Christmas parties or feasts.

The DFB's symbolic initiatives are further complemented by other fans that are not necessarily DFB members. However, the DFB supports them. This can be illustrated by the initiative entitled '*Bohemians Tour*

Australia 2014', a tour organised by a Bohemians Prague fan who wanted to revive the history of the club and its historical connectedness with Australia [Fieldnotes from observations, Prague, 12 May 2014].⁹ Similarly, another return to the past is represented by the successful online project '*On the way to win the national championship*' launched in the season of the 30-year anniversary of the first and only Czechoslovak Championship of the club's history. The project provided the fans with the occasion to revive the 1982–1983 season, the best times of their club ever. Newspaper articles, photos, videos, 'live' textual broadcast, and former players' comments were posted online to revive all the fixtures played by Bohemians in not only National Championship and National Cup, but also UEFA Cup games.

Fourth, Bohemians' supporters remain a significant source of creativity and ideas. The DFB founded the mobile fan shop that accompanied the fans to away games, provided fans with a platform to have their say in merchandising matters and functioned as a sort of fan club. They also maintain relations with former Bohemians players. Among these initiatives can be listed the supporters-led campaign to promote collaboration with football clubs in Europe that have the same colours as Bohemians Prague 1905, green and white. A letter sent in January 2014 to several European clubs met surprisingly a very prompt and positive reaction of the Lithuanian club Žalgiris Vilnius.¹⁰ The day after the letter was sent, Žalgiris Vilnius offered Bohemians Prague 1905 the free borrowing of two Lithuanian National Team players for the spring part of the season, in which Bohemians risked being relegated.

Fifth, the efficiency of the DFB is also assured through established social networks both within and beyond the Bohemians fan base. The establishment of the DFB in its very beginnings required a certain level of credibility that was difficult to gain due to a general distrust that was nourished by previous negative experiences in Czech football governance. 'We had to overcome the initial distrust and the total openness was

⁹ The aim of the tour was to remember and revive the significant milestone of the club history dated back to 1927, when the team named AFK Vršovice was on tour in Australia.

¹⁰ The club was inspired by the Bohemians Prague 1905 case and fans involvement after it went bankrupt.

crucial', recalled one of the DFB founders who specified that they also 'had to deal with the fact that we were distrustful similarly to all those alleged rescuers of Bohemians' (Interview, 15 April 2014). These uncertainties, feelings of distrust and efforts to react on them can be documented by the FAQ section on the DFB website. One of the frequently asked questions displayed on the websites is as follows: '*Is not this another tunnel?*'. The term tunnel is a metaphor that is used in the Czech public debate. It stands for an illegal process during which the money is invisibly channelled out from a collective, commonly public resource to a private possession.

The internal social networks have played a vital role in DFB mobilisation. As the DFB originator explains, not only a lawyer or a TV football commentator but also a guy with a drum who 'knew how to work well with those from the singing section and he managed to involve those who were useful for small tasks, such as leaflets delivery, or verbal explanation of information' initially joined the initiative (Interview, 15 April 2014). Although the DFB board has primarily been joined and led by experts with middle-class background, the DFB is not an elitist exclusionary group. In general, the direct links towards the main groups on the Bohemians Prague 1905 fan scene have been crucial in order to provide visibility and increase mobilisation on various occasions, such as the planned relocation of the stadium, symbolically important fixtures against the other Bohemians team, and voting at the municipality. Notwithstanding the apparent efficiency of existing social networks, the board of the DFB still perceives the communication both within the DFB and with broad fans to be inadequate and argued that it needed to be improved (Bofor.cz 2014d).

In addition to the internal social networks, the DFB disposes of significant external social networks that have substantiated the social networks maintained by the club management. Several interviews with different DFB members suggested that these networks are related not only to football governance, but also to the mass media, business sector, security forces, and politics. The DFB board members actively sought to build external networks through continuous lobbyings and negotiations. As one of the first DFB board members explained while referring to the origins of the DFB: 'I dutifully went around to all 31 members of the

League Assembly, I sent a letter to each of them, made a phone call or personally met them in order to explain our situation and asked them to 'forgive the fine' (Interview, 15 April 2014). Furthermore, an informal and accidentally established contact with the president of the FAČR through professional contacts of one of the DFB board members facilitated the solution of the struggle among the three Bohemians.

The existing social networks are maintained through a relative openness towards the membership base. This can be documented by the following observation of a DFB member who is also a former employee of the club:

'Although there are issues that belong to the business secrecy, the openness is quite big. The club management is not in an easy position. There have been several trials in course and there are pieces of information that could be misused . . . In general the situation in the case of Bohemians is quite difficult and complex'. (Interview, 24 February 2014)

These dynamics can be further documented by the following statement of the DFB board:

'There have been intense pressures from different sites, in particular on the club management that is expected to dance to the tune of those at the helm, otherwise we risk losing our hopes to resolve the stadium matter in a political way those ingenious will take a hint, it is not appropriate to elaborate upon this here more in-depth' (Bofor.cz 2014e).

As evidenced from several interviews, the communication aspect is crucial to the maintaining of social networks, and relationship of trust and despite the sensitive nature of some bits, information needs to be communicated in order to keep the fan base goodwill.

Discussion

Although the Bohemians Prague 1905 supporters have no ambition to obtain a formally recognised voice in decision-making processes and there is no institutional framework in the Czech Republic that would back up

any form of fan involvement, the DFB remains an important actor surrounding the Ďolíček cause and the club governance. This happens not only through the involvement of supporters in the board but also through informal interaction on everyday basis. The relationship between supporters and the club can be understood in terms of complementarity and according to various narratives the almost ten-year long history of the DFB counts not only situations of collaboration, but also occasional tensions. These are however considered to be rather rare. As one of the board members pointed out: 'We are understood to be a partner by the club, not as its enemy or faultfinder' (Interview, 10 February 2014).

The particular example of the DFP can be understood through the metaphor of an amoeba and its ability to interact with external environment by altering its shape. This understanding is at odds with traditional understanding of a supporters' trust as a separate entity, which is established alongside normative legal, governance and managerial models. The contact of the DFB with external actors is often blurred and it is difficult to draw fix boundaries between the DFB and the club. The amoebic nature of the supporters' trust is characterised by the DFB's capacity to spread its engagement among the club management, national football governance, politics, mass media and a diversified fan base. The amoebic nature helps to maintain the balance between emotionally and symbolically strong mobilisation and a rational, professionalised and expert-driven approach. While the former aspect is appealing to communities and mass media discourse, the latter aspect is attractive to policy-makers and football authorities. The amoebic nature is secured by both external and internal social networks that provide the DFB with access to various stakeholders and information. The capacity to liaise with diverse actors and to carry out a subtle diplomacy at different sites is crucial to understand the impact of the DFB.

The vital role of fans in the financial salvation of the club also promotes the culture of financial sustainability; this does not exclusively happen directly through the voice of fans but rather as the club's expression of gratitude and respect to what fans have previously achieved. Fans do enjoy a certain level of recognition by the club's management and are in a position to act as a critical corrective in regard to some matters. At the same time, the DFB role is complementary to the club. This does not only

apply to the rather administrative issues of marketing initiatives and ticketing, but also to soft competencies. The DFB contributes to developing the community atmosphere surrounding the club (albeit not necessarily using the term community themselves), and is involved in lobbying, campaigning, and politicisation, in particular in the case of Ďolíček.

While the fans promote the Ďolíček cause through the DPD (the political movement *Desítka pro domácí* already mentioned above), the club management is rather prudent with the public support of this supporters' initiative. This ambiguity is symbiotically useful for both sides. On the one hand, the DFB articulates the symbolic and emotional attachments by means of unconventional campaigning that would have otherwise remained marginalised and could hardly be joined by the club. By criticising the political instrumentalisation of Ďolíček and emphasising the passion, emotions, and traditional roots, the fans as the 'authentic' defenders reinforce the moral and symbolic value of the campaign. On the other hand, the club management maintains the links with other political allies, the DPD competitors. The club management also uses this unique fan engagement to promote the club. To sum up, fans continue to play their game, support openly the DPD political movement, mobilise crowds, organise demonstrations, and keep the topic surrounded by a traditionalist and moral discourse that are visible and appealing to the mass media. The club management on the other hand focuses its forces to promote the interests communicated by fans through other more conventional ways of negotiations with national governance and political representation of other parties.

Notwithstanding the continuous recall to passion, authenticity and moral values, the political engagement of the DFB has some ethical implications. In order to achieve its objectives, the DPD risks adopting political practices that this political movement criticises. More specifically, although it is in the political interests of other parties to promote the popular Ďolíček, they expect in exchange the DPD support in other, sometimes publicly contested matters. This can be well documented by the following statement made by a DFB member who does not support the DPD:

'The DPD would vote with anyone if this would make come true their unique wish. Once I said that it is a prostitute party. [...] If there was a

political upheaval and some change, according to me, they would even go with the current opposition if the opposition promised them the same' (Interview, 3 April 2014)

By focusing primarily on their sport-related objectives – which is in line with the political programme of the movement – the DPD therefore risks working, although indirectly, against the local community that they no doubt help to develop. The DPD Chair explained in an interview for a mainstream Czech daily newspaper why the movement did not support a direct purchase of *Ďolíček* and favours its exchange for real estate nearby the stadium:

'The alternative of the direct purchase [...] was on the table two years ago but it was rejected by the stadium owner. That was the cleanest method, but we had to look for another way'. (Šedivý and Bureš 2014)

The notion about 'the cleanest method' implies the awareness of only a relative cleanliness of the method, which is still supported by the DPD.

Notwithstanding its political involvement through the DPD, the DFB is primarily interest-, rather than ideology-driven. The DFB can hardly be explored from the perspective of political economy where the original ideological nature of trusts, or their normatively viewed potential, is seen to be in opposition to the commodification of football (c.f. D. Kennedy and P. Kennedy 2007; P. Kennedy 2012). Although the supporters of Bohemians Prague 1905 express their discontent with business interests that undermine moral values and traditions, their standpoint is not expressed in terms of an ideological critique that would contest the neo-liberal principles of contemporary societies. Although the Bohemians fan scene comprehends some ultras groups that would frame their perspectives and initiatives ideologically (Šešín 2014), the DFB uses the discourse of moral values and authenticity to promote the very single interest of *Ďolíček*.

The DFB represents an example of fan engagement based on the creativity and expertise of Czech fans. It was developed in a relative isolation from recently emerging transnational networks of supporters at a European level. The specificity of Czech conditions and in particular

the societal context of a post-socialist country could be understood as a structural condition that both stimulated the very involvement of fans in club governance and contributed to its peculiar nature. As regards the very involvement of fans, it occurs as a reaction to the economic problems raised by the traditional Bohemians Prague club. These problems might be explained as a side effect of post-socialist transformation processes with legal and economic uncertainties that affected different social spheres, including the sphere of sport (Duke 2011; Numerato 2009).

The positive resonance of the DFB engagement was facilitated thanks to the environment of a semi-peripheral football culture with rather weaker commercial pressures. An increasing engagement of Supporters Direct Europe echoed by European institutions and football governing bodies suggests that the culture of supporter ownership will be further spread across different national contexts. The European networking will with no doubt contribute to transnational flow of experiences, information and expertise and to an increase in critical awareness of (particular groups of) supporters in relation to the governance aspects of the game. Future research on football supporters should consider the increasing level of activism and civic engagement of football supporters who until recently have been primarily viewed through the lens of hooliganism or consumerism (Williams 2013), comparatively address the implications of these developments for the relations between fans and clubs, and analyse supporters' influence on governance across different football cultures (García and Welford 2015; Numerato forthcoming).

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12

From the Bottom to the Premiership: The Significance of the Supporters' Movement in the Governance of Football Clubs in Poland

Radosław Kossakowski

Introduction

From a European perspective, football appears a strongly commercialised discipline (Dubal 2010; Greenfield and Osborn 2001; P. Kennedy and D.; Kennedy 2012) in which a large number of clubs have turned into 'transnational corporations' (Giulianotti and Robertson 2009: 82–96). The popularity of 'the global game' (Giulianotti 1999) attracts media and corporate sponsorship, resulting in an unprecedented financial success for leagues and clubs in many European countries. TV rights revenues and extremely high sponsorship deals (mainly with companies and organisations from the Middle East, e.g. Qatar, or tycoons from Malaysia and India, not to forget Russian oligarchs) have made football a massive

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industry and turned players into celebrities (Smart 2005). However, this ‘commodification of football’ (Moor 2007) also has a dark side, involving the ‘muscle drain’ of the best and most talented players to the centre of the football world, mainly the *Big Five* leagues: Spain, England, Germany, Italy, and France. As a consequence of commercialisation, football rivalry is split into the centre and periphery, with Polish, Czech, Balkan, Scandinavian, or even Belgian and Dutch leagues becoming the victims of financial and cultural ‘hegemony’ of their largest and richest European counterparts.

Another consequence concerns problems faced by clubs unable to cope with the challenge of market rivalry. In order to compete with top clubs, they have to sign exorbitant contracts with players, which can lead to chronic debt, sometimes with disastrous results, as illustrated by the fate of Glasgow Rangers and Portsmouth FC.¹ Occasionally, fans reject the dominating commercial model of football and become mobilised to form new social movements (Millward 2011). The examples of FC United of Manchester, AFC Wimbledon, and SV Austria Salzburg show that at a turning point supporters can decide to set up their own football clubs, which are run in a way reflecting participation ideals and values of a local community. On the other hand, fans can also save an already existing club, displaying a high level of determination and social capital, evidenced in the cases of Portsmouth and Exeter City FC (for other examples, see García and Welford 2015). British cases have become the subject of a number of studies, not in the least thanks to Supporters Direct, an organisation helping to overcome organisational problems in club management (P. Kennedy 2012).

It is worth stressing that Poland has also seen a case in which supporters played an important role in reviving clubs that suffered from managerial or financial problems. KSZO Ostrowiec, Odra Wodzisław, Szombierki Bytom, Stilon Gorzów, Hutnik Nowa Huta (a district of Cracow), Chrobry Głogów, and Lechia Gdańsk are but a few

¹ In 2012, Glasgow Rangers was relegated to the fourth level of competition in the Scottish league system due to financial problems and debts. In the case of Portsmouth FC, financial problems (estimated debts of £135 million) have caused relegation to the fourth tier of English football (the club entered administration in 2010).

Polish clubs which continue to exist largely as a result of considerable involvement of their fans.² Since a case study involving all of them would exceed the limits of this chapter, the focus is on the latter three clubs. The choice is not made randomly; at some point of their history all three have faced a critical situation which made it virtually impossible to develop any further and it was the involvement of their supporters that played a major role in their revival. However, the fate of each club turned out to be different (which is underlined in the next paragraphs), which raises the question of when social participation is no longer enough and support from the outside is needed (sponsors, local authorities, etc.). An analysis of the cases is instrumental in considering the pros and cons of ‘mutuality as a form of ownership’ (Ward et al. 2013).

At the moment, Lechia Gdańsk is a limited company with a German-Swiss consortium as a majority shareholder; financed by private capital and the club plays in the Polish first division (*Ekstraklasa*). Chrobry Głogów is a municipal limited company financed by local authorities and plays in the First League (level 2). Hutnik Nowa Huta is still run by an association of supporters and plays in the Fourth League (level 5).

The present cases consider questions which could be summarised as follows: What type of governance dominates in clubs run by fans? What are the limitations for the development of clubs in such cases? What motivations, values, and forms of capital drive supporters to take such challenges? In such cases, can fans count on the support of local authorities? Does the development of clubs (e.g. sports promotion) require the transformation of the club into a limited company? An analysis of empirical material makes it possible to offer an answer to these questions.³

² Note that these are not clubs from the fringes of Polish football, but include the champion of Poland (Szombierki), a Polish Cup winner (Lechia), clubs playing in European competitions (Odra, Hutnik), the Ekstraklasa (KSZO), and the Second League (Stilon, Chrobry).

³ This chapter is based on a research project financed by a grant (no. 2013/09/D/HS/6/00238) from the National Science Centre (*Narodowe Centrum Nauki*) in Poland. All interviews quoted in the text were conducted during the project in 2014 and 2015. The research project was dedicated to evaluate Polish fan culture in a broader sense (eg. cultural, performative, identity dimensions). The below article contains a part of empirical data from research.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section presents a brief historical outline of fandom culture in Poland, with civic involvement at the organisational level as a relatively new phenomenon dating back to the 2000s. This is followed by a theoretical part providing a sociological framework for considering activities and attitudes of supporters. The next sections offer three case studies of the role of supporters in reviving football clubs which found themselves on the verge of collapse (Lechia Gdańsk, Chrobry Głogów, and Hutnik Nowa Huta).

Fandom culture in Poland: A Brief History

The origin of football fandom movement dates back to the 1970s. To a certain extent, the phenomenon was stimulated by club management, inevitably connected with the state administration, as there was no private club ownership in the period. Such officially organised fan clubs went on sponsored trips to away matches. However, it was quite soon that supporters began to organise themselves independently, dissociating their groups from the official model. The number of 'firms' increased, especially in the largest cities. Since Polish fans had no resources or organisational potential which would enable them to follow such examples as the *ultras* culture in Italy, what dominated was the hooligan model based on the British patterns. Physical confrontation became more evident and more intense in the 1980s. The decade was a formative period of the Polish 'hooligan' movement.

After 1989, the culture of violence in Polish football stadiums developed on an unprecedented scale. Police data indicate an increasing number of hooligan incidents. The riots during a Polonia Warsaw vs Legia Warsaw match, when a club building was set alight and 37 police officers were injured, provides the ultimate example of the atmosphere of the period. 1997 marked an important point: in view of the situation, the government decided to introduce *The Act on Mass Events Security*. It proved to be a crucial step in tackling football stadium violence and has had an impact on the situation ever since.

Before the new law was implemented, Polish football stadiums had hardly been under any control at all. Fans regularly lit up flares during matches, travelled practically unsupervised, put up fights in and around the stadiums, in the streets and train stations (just as in the case of the English hooligans; see King and Knight 1999; Pennant 2003), and so was fighting to seize flags and scarves, ripping up benches and throwing dangerous objects in the stadiums. This was possible due to the absence of an adequate law, effective police procedures, modern stadium facilities (e.g. CCTV), and experienced security staff. Social factors also contributed to the problem: unemployment, economic problems brought by the first years of market economy, and a massive scale of corruption in Polish football. Although the new regulations (including such measures as a ban on flares) did not eradicate violence in the stadiums, acts of aggression became considerably less frequent. Polish football stadiums began to change and the process of 'civilising' football hooliganism was clearly under way. The world of Polish fans has kept evolving, with *ultras* emerging as the dominant power (Antonowicz et al. 2016). Stadiums have become the scene of enormous support shows, the so-called 'choreographies', often involving entire terraces. According to police statistics, since 2010 the figure for match-day football-related offences has been on increase again, although the number of high-risk matches requiring police presence has declined (Kossakowski 2015). However, reports of the Polish Football Association (PZPN) and *Ekstraklasa Ltd.*, the league organiser, reveal different data, indicating that Polish stadiums have not been safer for years. For example, recently there was only a single match which finished before time due to incidents involving physical confrontation between supporters of opposite teams (in the 2013–14 season, Legia Warsaw vs Jagiellonia Białystok, February 2014).

Increasing figures for football-related offences, fines, and stadium bans could have been related to the UEFA Euro 2012 held in Poland, and to the ensuing accumulation of modernisation changes. In addition to modernising stadiums, the tournament also meant a tougher security policy, as could be seen in the 2009 amendment of *The Act on Mass Events Security*. Both these aspects of change stimulated opposition among Polish fans, with protests taking the form of political and cultural contestation in recent years. In some cases, supporters became the

principal actors of anti-modernisation initiatives contesting club ownership transfers and commercialisation of Polish football. Fans rejected new club management policies, such as changing the name of the club, rise of ticket prices, or attempted ‘replacement’ of traditional supporters by ‘new’ consumer fans. In this way, Polish fans became one of the last ‘bastion(s) of anti-consumerism’ (Antonowicz et al. 2011), characterised by a strong anti-establishment sentiment against politicians and some media.

Social and Cultural Capital of the Fan Movement

The turn of the 2000s was a period for the official formation of registered associations which not only represent the supporters but go far beyond different aspects of fandom in their activities (Kossakowski 2016). In 2007, the National Union of Football Supporter Associations (*Ogólnopolski Związek Stowarzyszeń Kibiców*) was set up to protect the values important for the fans and their group interests, and to represent them in contact with the authorities. The organisation includes representatives of fans supporting 53 different clubs. The member associations are a form of social movement, fuelled mainly by the social capital of their members. Their activities go beyond fandom and include such spheres as celebrating important events and personalities of Polish history and charity actions (helping and organising summer camps for children in fostering care institutions, donating blood, raising funds for medical equipment for hospices, supporting animal shelters and so forth). The associations also become involved in political actions, such as boycotts of club management (Wisła Cracow and Zawisza Bydgoszcz), official protests against police actions or court decisions (Jagiellonia Białystok), and anti-government match ‘choreographies’ (Lech Poznań and Legia Warsaw).

All these kinds of activities require the crucial element of ‘collective spirit’. Alain Touraine noted that ‘social action is the building of a world of cultural creations through human work; this process can only be collective’ (quoted in Pyka 2010: xvii). His observation provides an

adequate interpretation of football supporters taking over and reviving football clubs, a situation unprecedented in the Polish context. First, it is a form of social action related to cultural space, as the club is perceived in terms of a non-material value. Second, in each case it is a collective process involving a group of devoted fans. Under the circumstances, it had to be collective, given a fundamental rejection of the idea of a single, 'alien' club owner,⁴ which meant that supporters were able to take such responsibility only as a group. The reason is that fans only through collective effort are able to provide financial support, to manage larger entities than supporters associations. It would be very difficult for any single person to resolve various administrative problems and challenges. 'Collective spirit' means that people with different skills can manage the football club together, creating the sense of community.

In an analysis of the social action of fans, the key element is not any individual member of the group (although charismatic personalities certainly play a role), but mutual relations between them. This necessitates a careful consideration of the notion of social capital, 'the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 14). The collective aspect of relationships is even more important in the context of such hermetic groups as football fans, characterised by a limited trust in 'outside' structures the police, political authorities, and the media. It is for this reason that the social capital of fan groups is mainly of the 'banding' type (Putnam 1993). On the one hand, their collective identity is rooted in a shared awareness and system of values, referred to as 'cultural capital', with the core element that the club is perceived as an autotelic value, a 'symbolic universe' (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 110), or even the sacred (football fans in many countries make use of religious metaphors, e.g. 'Celtic is my religion'). On the other hand, this identity is consolidated in the course of repeated

⁴The lack of trust toward club owners is not only a Polish phenomenon. Findings from the FREE Research Project show that 80.1 per cent of UK fans answer 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree to an extent' to the statement: 'We cannot always trust what club owners/presidents say' (FREE Project, 2015a).

interaction rituals (Collins 2004) boosting the 'community spirit'. This makes it easier to mobilise the resources of group members in situations which require, for example, organising a trip of a few hundred or a few thousand supporters to an away match. It would not be possible without the skill of activating such extraordinary social capital. In addition to providing a strong bond, it also has other important functions, such as making it possible to achieve aims which would be unattainable for an individual, even if equipped with technological resources (Coleman 1994: 302). It seems barely surprising that no any single person is capable of addressing all duties associated with club management. But perhaps the most important thing is that fans are sensitive to the collective value of mutual trust.

Considering issues of social and cultural capital in analytical reflection on fan movements is instrumental in explaining why in some cases supporters decided to take over the management of a club which had gone into severe decline as a result of mismanagement and its concomitant excessive debt. Distinctive emotional and cognitive correlates of attitudes toward the club, coupled with interpersonal bonds within the group, are an important predictor of actions related to the activities and survival of the club. In other words, since a football club often has great value for the identity of many people, its demise cannot be left without any reaction. Generally, fans do not act in the same manner as consumers and they do not swap producers if they are disappointed with a product (Conn 1997).⁵ In the cases under discussion, supporters, often with hooligan background, have swapped their club scarves for ties and become responsible for the management of the club, raising sponsorship, and making an impact on the local community. The phenomenon is even more fascinating if we consider that fan culture is marked by internal rifts and antagonisms (see Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001).

⁵ 'Whereas inadequate performance in business tends to lead to the loss of customers followed by events such as internal restructuring, acquisition by new owners or liquidation, football clubs are highly resilient, even in the face of catastrophic failure on the field of play or on the balance sheet. This is due mainly to the highly loyal or fanatical nature of their customer base' (Dobson and Goddar, 2004: 269–271).

Lechia Gdańsk: From the Sixth League to the Premiership

Lechia Football Club is an important element of local identity for many people in Gdańsk. Under Communism, the old stadium often echoed with anti-system slogans and was sometimes referred to as ‘the stronghold of anti-Communism’ (Kossakowski 2011). Today, the club competes for top trophies in a modern arena built for the UEFA Euro 2012. However, the road to this success was a hard one, with many failures on the way. In 1989, the year that marked the beginning of Polish transformation, Lechia was relegated from the First League (Level 1 at the time), which was to be only the first step on a slippery slope. Attempts to save the club by forming alliances of different social, political, and business organisations were short-lived and did not bring a lasting improvement of the situation. In the early 1990s, a new company set up to run the club failed to meet expectations and Lechia found itself in the Third League. Hopes for a revival came with a merger with Olimpia Poznań football club in the mid-1990s, which meant that Lechia returned to the First League, but not as a result of its achievement on the pitch. However, the fans’ happiness was short-lived: following penalties imposed by the Polish Football Association, the club was relegated to the Second League, to find itself in the Third League in 1997. In a bid to save Lechia, the management went ahead with another merger. This time it was Polonia Gdańsk, a local rival playing in the Second League. Maciej Turnowiecki, the President of Lechia during 2007–2012 commented on the period as follows:

This second merger was utterly rejected by the fans. There was no support, no club colours, everyone stood there with their backs turned to the pitch. They treated matches more in terms of a social occasion than a sports event. (Interview, 22 September 2014)

The entire scheme turned out to be another failure. Relegation to the Third League instead of the expected promotion was the last straw. To some extent, supporters who took things into their own hands succeeded

where politicians and businessmen had failed. In 2001, the club broke up its association with Polonia: Lechia was left only with the training team, a few managers working on a voluntary basis, and a group of talented junior players (in the first match, the oldest player in the team was 19). As decided by the Polish Football Association, the club joined the competitions of the so-called 'A-Class' (level 6). With practically no financial resources available, even paying for a coach trip to away games was a problem. In this situation, the fans started to drive players in their own cars. Also, turnout of Lechia supporters at away matches was unprecedented for this level of competition nationwide. Recalling this period, one of them explains why fans stayed with their club in spite of its misery:

I think there is something special about Gdańsk people. As for me, I remember my first match, it was the Sixth League. There were about 300 people in the stadium. The most devoted. And this atmosphere somehow stays with you. Once you feel it, you just stay. (Interview, 13 August 2014)

One of the websites devoted to the club summed it up as follows:

The new initiative was met with huge support from the fans: match turnout was ten times higher than at the time when the team had played in the Third League as Lechia-Polonia. There was a hope that after a number of promotions which had been 'bought' thanks to mergers, there would be a new opening, a start from scratch, from the Sixth League, the lowest in the history of the club. (Lechia Gdansk 2015)

In a bid to save the club, the fan movement became institutionalised as 'White and Green' Lechia Gdańsk Supporters' Association (*Stowarzyszenie Kibiców Lechii Gdańsk 'Biało-Zieloni'*). The fans decided to engage the public and the local authorities in the disastrous situation of the club. They stood up for the 2002 local elections as 'Come on Lechia' (*Naprzód Lechio!*), which received 3.14 per cent of votes thus failing to pass the 5 per cent threshold, but coming to the attention of Gdańsk authorities. In a meeting with a group of fans, the mayor

promised assistance to the club to secure their official support for his candidacy in the election.

The club urgently needed money for current activities, because emergency assistance from the most devoted fans did not guarantee any financial stability. Stories about local businessmen who brought plastic bags with cash to pay for renting the pitch and to buy jerseys and shorts for the players have become a legend. One of the supporters recalled the following situation:

We had a fan who was a big baker in Gdańsk. When things got really bad, we used to call him to ask for help and he brought money in a bag. Once, it was as much as 20,000 złotys [at some point, monthly expenses of the club amounted to about 10,000 złotys⁶]. (Interview, 20 June 2015)

Another fan initiative was the Business Partner Club (November 2002). The forum brought together people and enterprises wanting to help the club (one of its members was to become Lechia President in 2014). As a result of fan involvement, three representatives of the supporters were appointed as members of the managing board (2003). Fans helped to clean the stadium and joined the security team, which meant that the club had their organisational assistance and was able to make some savings. On the other hand, this also provided a guarantee of control over more radical fans. In 2003, a long-standing *ultras* fan became the managing director of the club. Thus, supporters were formally among those who contributed to Lechia's revival: the club made its way five levels up and returned to the top league.

The role of fans proved so crucial that the management decided to conduct a poll on the plan to include the brand of a major sponsor in the name of the club (2007). Since supporters firmly rejected the idea regardless of the amount of sponsorship offered, the move did not go ahead. In 2008, Lechia management (still including representatives of supporters) and the city hall set up a limited company with the latter as a majority shareholder. In this way, the club both had a guarantee of stability and met formal

⁶ 10,000 złotys are worth roughly 2,300 euros.

requirements for an *Ekstraklasa* licence. With organisational issues resolved, it became possible to attract sponsors and investors. Lechia secured title sponsorship from a major oil company and on a later date a Polish entrepreneur bought a majority of shares in the club. The club moved to a new stadium with a seating capacity of 44,000. In 2014, the majority of shares (57 per cent) was taken over by a German-Swiss consortium, which set the target of qualifying for European club competitions. Several new, mostly foreign, players were brought to the club.

What, then, is the position of supporters in the club nowadays? The new owner appointed the president who was an active member of the Business Partner Club and had a background in the fan movement. This could appear as an intention to build proper relationship with the supporters, or to control the 'die-hard' fans (however, the presidency lasted only a few months, from August to December 2014). When the company was originally set up, Lechia was formally an association and some shares were allocated to its current members. The company statutes allowed a new strategic investor and gave him a decisive vote in the matters regarding investments and finance (with some decisions requiring a specified majority, e.g. 75 per cent is the minimum to change the statute or issue new shares). However, the decisions involving club *imponderabilia* (such as the change of its colours, logo, location or core activities) require an absolute majority, which, considering the presence of fan shareholders, is practically impossible. In this way, the 46 people with fan movement background became 'the guardians of tradition' who have both symbolic and legal rights to defend it from a sell-out. In this context, the 'Lechia is us' (*Lechia to my*) banner displayed in the *ultras* stand is more than a mere slogan. Although the supporters accepted a private investor taking over the management, they reserved their right to decide on the club name, colours, logo, and tradition. Thus, they preserve cultural capital for future generations.

Chrobry Głogów: Fans Take Over the Club

In many ways, the developments in Chrobry resemble the Gdańsk story: in both cases a disastrous financial and organisational situation brought about active reaction of the fans. Based in the town of Głogów (population of

70,000), Chrobry is not among the greatest clubs, as the Second League has been its top level ever. However, it is deeply rooted in local identity and its fate concerns a considerable number of residents. Chrobry fans were among the initiators of the *ultras* scene in Poland, one of the first to introduce match ‘choreography’ and flares. Towards the end of 2006, it turned out that the club had a debt of about a million zlotys and the players had not been paid their wages. January 2007 saw an unusual show of civic activity of its supporters. As the club had the official status of an open association and regularly paid membership fees were enough to have a vote in the general meeting, a large number of fans registered themselves as members. A group of 50 of them turned up at the election meeting and had enough votes to prevent the election of the old managing board for the new term. In a show-off, the old board walked out of the room and new people took over the management of the club. Six of them, including the newly appointed managing director, represented the fan movement.

It was not a spontaneous action but a carefully planned operation. Three Chrobry supporters had stood up for the November 2006 local elections and, with the support of a considerable number of fan votes, they became members of the town council. It was a sensible move, considering the fact that the club was financially supported by the town hall. As councillors, they had a say in the decisions and increased the chances of further assistance from this source. One of them, the new managing director of the club elected in 2007, recalled:

The fact was that we had planned to do it three or four years before . . . It was not even about ousting the management. It was about putting Chrobry back on its feet. We wanted to do something to put it back on the right track. We got into the town council not to make politics, but to save Chrobry. (Interview, 13 March 2015)

The new ‘fan’ management changed all the locks on the club premises the day it was elected. In the first year, they faced problems hardly imaginable in professional football:

There were no pens or paper, and we had to bring our own computers. We brought cups and plates from home . . . We asked the fans to make

donations to the club. Today, I know that without them breathing down my neck, I would have given up after half a year. There were some [difficult] moments: in December, just before Christmas, we did not have enough money to pay the wages, so we put in our own money. I spent most of my council allowance on the club. It all worked out because the managing board was a group of enthusiasts. We were one. Our private meetings were also about Chrobry Głogów. (Interview, 13 March 2015)

What made it work at the organisational level was existing social capital, i.e. the network of relationships between the fans (similarly as in the case of Lechia Gdańsk, fans supported their club within their capabilities: some of them provided legal expertise, some took the business matters, others were gathered in city council to express their commitment to the club). Because the club was in debt to transport companies and sports equipment suppliers, the supporters, some of them running a business, provided sponsorship to buy such things as jerseys for junior teams. Non-professional management and a considerable number of people motivated by their affection for the club joined their forces: they provided Chrobry with financial support, helped to rebuild it in the organisational sense, and restored the trust of the local public. Similar to Gdańsk, the Mayor of Głogów noticed these efforts and decided to finance the running expenses of the club. Another resemblance to the case of Lechia is the sporting achievement: Chrobry made its way from a club struggling at the bottom of the Third League (Level 4) in 2007, to the First League (Level 2) in 2014. The work put in by the fans managing the club was appreciated by the local community: the managing director of the club, Przemysław Bożek, received more votes than any other candidate for Głogów town council member in the 2010 local elections.

In 2012, the club was transformed into a limited company. It was quite unusual to see about 150 fans present when the councillors took a vote on the matter, a clear sign of how important the club was for the local public. Two councillors with fan background wore their club scarves while addressing the council on the occasion (Białęcka 2011). Similar to Lechia, Chrobry became a professional sports organisation

requiring professional management. Those supporters still work for the club because of their legal or managerial skills and not purely because of their emotional involvement. Fans who provide support to the team during matches receive financial assistance from the club towards the costs of trips to away matches, while 200 of the most devoted fans can buy season tickets for a symbolic one złoty.

They get this money because they turn up at Chrobry matches, they show their support and they promote the town. It is my duty. They are what the club is about and considering all these years I think they deserve to be treated in this way. [Managing director of the club, a town councillor and former fan, 13 March 2015]

At the moment, Chrobry is a stable limited company financed by the town hall, plays in a modern stadium at the second level of the league system and has a large group of supporters. Although the club is also sponsored by dozens of local businesses, it is not enough to target success in the *Ekstraklasa*.

Hutnik Nowa Huta – ‘Our Club, Our Rules’, but . . .

Nowa Huta, a district of Cracow, the second largest Polish city, takes its name from large steelworks, built by the Communist authorities in 1949⁷. Hutnik Cracow sports club was established following the initiative of its employees. Thanks to state funding, in its heyday it had as many as 20 different sports sections. The greatest period of Hutnik Football Team was the mid-1990s, when they played in the top league for seven consecutive seasons. In 1996, they won bronze, which qualified them for the then UEFA Cup (nowadays known as UEFA Europa League, where they played against teams such as AS Monaco). It seems

⁷The phrase ‘Our Club, Our Rules’ comes from the title of an article by A. Brown (2008) discussing FC United of Manchester, a fan-owned football club.

to be the fickle nature of fate that the best season in the history of the club marked the beginning of its demise (Gliksman 2010). Nowa Huta steelworks, the main sponsor, was privatised but the state authorities did not make provisions obliging the new owner to support the club. Hutnik management had become used to the assistance of the former sponsor and did not manage to stand up to the new situation. As a result, the club went down the hill in the league pyramid. In the middle of the 2009–10 season, it turned out that the players had not been paid for months and the club was six million złotys in debt. The supporters had made some donations to the budget even before: it was already in 2004 that they established an association aiming to help the club financially. The fans sponsored bonuses for the players (as it turned out in 2010, it was the only money received by the team members), bought equipment for junior teams, sponsored longer away trips, and even arranged a flat for a foreign player. All this was done without any formal representation in the management of the club.

In early 2010, supporters lost their trust in the management: they decided to take matters into their own hands and in February they established a new association called ‘New Hutnik 2010’ (*Nowy Hutnik 2010*), which ran a boycott of the matches played by the team. As a result, the old Hutnik disintegrated and the fans entered a new club in the competition. Although it was meant to continue the old traditions, the new name, Hutnik Nowa Huta, stressed its local character. One of the supporters explained: ‘...Hutnik has always been a club that belongs here in Nowa Huta. . . . Whatever level of the league we play in and whatever match turnout there is, Hutnik has always been and will always remain a showpiece of this district’ (Hutnik Nowa Huta 2012: 46). Regional football association accepted the team for the Fourth League competition (Level 5). Today, the club plays in the Third League and is still managed by the fans’ association. One of its deputy presidents, and a founding member of the association, recalled the difficulties of the early days:

It was a really difficult thing to do and even today it is hard to believe that we managed to do so much. . . . It was an association which had just started, which had no resources, and which had only begun to accept its

first members. The tasks ahead were really hard: for an association like that, it was quite a challenge to maintain the team in the Fourth League. Even more so, that the financial expectations of footballers are quite high even in the lower leagues, a fact that tends to be overlooked. In addition to this, there were also costs of renting a stadium and a training pitch, and buying the equipment. It is quite easy to calculate, and we had to spend a few thousand zlotys just on the equipment. So, we ran up expenses and we had to finance the junior team in addition to that. It was our success that we got people interested and they were generous with their money. And we really did manage to join the competition and, after two years, win promotion to the Third League, which meant a return to the level the old Hutnik had played when it collapsed (Interview, 3 September 2014)

The idea of a new club was accepted by the local community: over 2,000 fans turned up at the 60th anniversary of the club in July 2010 (a friendly match with the German side 1. FC Magdeburg) and the figure for away matches in the league has sometimes been as high as 600 (it is not an ordinary number of Hutnik away fans, the average figure for club in 2014/15 season was approximately 100; the average figures of the best teams in Hutnik's division achieve the level of approximately 300). For four years, the supporters have had to prove their own value to themselves, and, even more so, to the world in general and the football and local authorities in particular. One of the fans commented:

In general, the old-style football associations, such as the MZPN [a regional branch of the Polish Football Association, RK], look askance at young, energetic people who want to change something, to promote development and innovation. . . . We do not have any backup or informal connections, so we have to achieve everything ourselves. Of course, they look at us as hardcore fans, but it gives us even more boost. We just have to be even more diligent, trustworthy, and competent (Hutnik Nowa Huta 2012: 46)

A deputy president of the club stressed that the club still suffers from bad publicity of the old days, as Polish football fans did in general:

In the Football Association, we were often treated as a pathological club, a club of hooligans and fans. These people were wrong because they did not

know us. . . . The Football Association started to cooperate very closely with the police and they planned to eliminate very loud cheering and, let us say, the use of flares. (Interview, 3 September 2014)

Although the club has some local sponsors, membership fees occupy an important position in the budget (in the period of the research it was the most important revenue stream): about 150 members pay a monthly contribution of 100 złotys (approximately €23). The entire management team work on a voluntary basis and their main principle is to avoid overspending. Match day revenue is an important source of funding, but it depends on the cost of renting the stadium and on highly demanding security procedures required by the police. The fact of running an own club stimulates a sensible approach to fandom culture:

Of course, the approach of a supporter who is an executive and that of a supporter who is a fan will never be exactly the same. Still, we think that even when you run your own club, take responsibility for it, and want it to move on as high as possible, you can keep up your independent approach with a touch of a wild spirit. It can all be negotiated. We have all known everyone around here very well for years and we can notice there is a will to come to an agreement and to work together for the glory of Hutnik (Hutnik Nowa Huta 2012: 47)

Indeed, the executive board (composed of nine fans and elected by members of the association) is in regular contact with the supporters to consult them on club issues. This proves that trust is a key factor in consolidating social capital (Sztompka 1999) and it stimulates grass roots activity.

Hutnik supporters website lists a number of fund-raising actions for the club, such as 'A tenner for Hutnik' (*Dycha na Hutnika*), a collection among individual fans, organised to settle debts with the stadium manager, or 'Hutnik crew', an initiative aimed at emigrant club supporters. There has also been a collection of bottled water for the players and publicity for donations to the club. One of the fans even proposed a collection of empty toner cartridges, which could be sold to raise money.

Although all of these have been small-scale grass-roots actions, they certainly confirm the importance of the club to its local supporters.

All three cases indicate that football clubs can be saved and transformed into stable organisations as a result of a mobilisation of the public and actions taken by the fans. However, more substantial financial resources are required in order to secure their further development (similarly in other countries, see FREE Project 2015b):

After four years, we are aware that we have come, as it were, to the limit of our financial potential and we cannot devote more of our time to the club. If we want to move on and take the next step, there have to be more financial resources.

The deputy president of Hutnik confirmed that the executive board is ready to accept a sponsor in the club structure. They are also ready to set up a sports limited company (an official requirement for the First League and *Ekstraklasa* clubs):

If someone wants to invest their money, they will want to have more say in the decisions. We are ready for that. We can appoint such persons as members of the executive board. If . . . it were necessary to set up a sports limited company some time later, we would be ready to accept that as well, and we have already talked about it. Still, I think that in such a situation the association should keep a certain percentage of shares; it should also have a representative in the executive board or the supervisory board. Well, it is one of the paths of development, and it is the most desired one, because we do not really see how, as an association, we could generate the resources necessary to win promotion to, let us say, the Second League (Interview, 3 September 2014)

The case of Hutnik proves that after a few years of grass-roots, voluntary work there comes the question: ‘What next?’. Those who work on a voluntary basis have their own jobs and families, so at a certain point they find it increasingly difficult to combine all these responsibilities:

The costs of the team were higher every year, which left some people burnt out; others chose their career or family life. We are now in a difficult

moment: it has been five years of our activity and Hutnik has to find new people who will be a new spark and give it more energy. (Interview, 3 September 2014)

It is evident that although swapping a ‘club scarf’ for a ‘tie’ does not amount to a betrayal of fan lifestyle, it generates a new cognitive perspective. Financial barriers to sports development are a major problem in Polish football. Another question is the desire for achievement. In today’s world, this is inevitably connected with the commercialisation of football. As yet, Poland has not experienced economic exclusion of certain categories of supporters, such as working class, from the stadiums. We have not lost the social spirit of community to a commercial show.

Conclusion

Post-1989 transformation opened Poland to the world of market economy, which provided a general modernisation impulse for the country. For sports clubs, new times sometimes meant new opportunities, but sometimes brought unexpected problems. The latter was especially the fate of clubs that had been financed by state-owned enterprises: in some cases, if there was no private investor to take their place, clubs often collapsed. As presented in this chapter, in such situations, devoted supporters started initiatives to save them.

In addition to the cases discussed above, it is also interesting to mention Górnik Zabrze, a fourteen-time Polish champion. When it turned out that the club has a debt of forty million złotys (with its annual budget at the level of fourteen million), its supporters set up ‘Socios Górnik’, an initiative aiming to help it. An official statement from the group declared:

We are from different regions of Poland, we are of different ages, we are different in many ways, but there is one thing that makes us the same: we are all Górnik fans. This initiative has been launched for Górnik, our club. [...] As Górnik fans, we want to take some responsibility for its fortunes.

Grass-roots involvement and responsible management of funds that we raise are the ways in which we are going to support our club (God 2014: 8)

Poland does not have a very long tradition of democracy or market economy and fan involvement in grass-roots initiatives is really a matter of a very recent phenomenon which just emerged in the last few years. The future will tell whether such an activity will become a lasting element of Polish football.

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13

Supporter Ownership in Turkish Football

Emir Güney

Introduction

During the first decade of the twentieth century, football in Turkey was highly regarded as a pastime event, which was played by people that were eager to spend some time while staying physically active. The first clubs were founded by those players who just wanted to play regular and scheduled football for recreational purposes. The formation of a club for this purpose led to many others and the leagues started to develop, all of which were controlled by organisational bodies also run by these players. These people were club presidents, coaches, managers and also fans. People who played the sport were also the main elements of how it was organised (Yüce 2014).

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Modern football is not just a pastime activity anymore. It became a mass spectator event. According to FIFA (2015), 3.2 billion people in total watched the 2014 World Cup in Brazil on television. This evolution has created many opportunities for people around the world to enjoy the sport more and more. Elite-level professional players get paid millions of euros in order to create a show for the fans while trying to make their team the best in the world. Clubs and associations thrive on people's love for football by selling them tickets to the games, merchandises, and digital broadcasting packages while generating revenues to buy better players in order to reach their ultimate goal: to be the champion at the end of the season.

However, the clubs seem to forget one very important fact: the foundations of modern football rest on the social and economic input of the fans. It has become a consumer product rather than merely a physical event. It evolved into an entertainment sector in which fans pay to watch elite-level players displaying their skills with the ball. Therefore, it should not be forgotten that if there are fewer and fewer fans that watch the games, follow and support their teams, and spend money and time for their teams, revenues of the clubs will eventually drop. Less interest in football in general will also mean less investment by the sponsors and broadcasters that finance these clubs. Therefore, fans can be placed in a central position within the football world and they are also a very important stakeholder of the football industry.

Fans own the game, not billionaire businessmen, huge corporations or media companies. The main discussion point of the chapter is the supporter-club relationship in Turkish football. It is claimed that if clubs had stronger and more interactive relationships with their supporters, instead of using primarily the laws and regulations to keep the system running, the growing issue of football violence will eventually decrease. The proposition to resolve this issue is to create open channels between the clubs and their supporters taking into account the examples of UK's Supporters Direct and Football Supporters Europe.

In the first part of the chapter, the Turkish football fandom will be analysed from a historical perspective showing how fans are accepted as the major cause of violence and disorder and how they are excluded from decision-making processes even though almost all of the clubs are

formed as associations with fan members that have democratic voting powers. The second part of the chapter will focus on the English model of ‘supporter ownership’ and try to show that there is a successful supporter-active management model that is used by the British clubs. In the third part, the Turkish club ownership/membership system will be explained. The fourth part of the chapter will focus on the international supporter organisations that try to protect the rights of supporters. The concluding section argues that violence and disorder issues are not phenomenons that can be resolved unilaterally but only by strengthening the relationship and interaction between the clubs and their supporters.

From the 1900s to 1923: Turkish Football’s Evolution

Before the Association Law was established in 1909, the players themselves had formed the clubs and leagues unofficially. Those who played the game also implemented the rules and there were only a small number of teams that constituted the leagues. For example, *Istanbul Futbol Birliği* (IFB, Istanbul Football Union) was formed in 1903 by only four clubs: Moda, Elpis, Imogene, and Kadıköy Football Clubs (Özelçi 2010). Since there were no other clubs, a person who wanted to play football had three choices: to play among their friends irregularly rather than under a league schedule; to try to join one of these clubs; or to create their own club. Since there was no Association Law until 1909, it was fairly easy to form a club: bring your friends together and find a name for your team.

Until the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, there were no more than 20 football clubs across the country. This was mostly due to the Ottoman Law that prohibited Muslim population of the Empire to play football. It was considered as a dangerous activity in which too many people came together. These were the weaker times of the Ottoman Empire in which a *coup d’état* was a permanent possibility. Therefore, an event like a football match was considered hazardous to the Empire. This was also the reason why most of the first Turkish

football clubs were founded by the non-Muslim population living in Istanbul, most of them being British citizens (Fişek 2003).

This prohibitive law did not prevent the Muslim population from showing interest in the fast growing global phenomenon named association football. Many of the Muslim population played in the teams created by non-Muslims under aliases in order to avoid being caught by the Ottoman authorities. The same pressure applied to the fans that watched these games. Muslim people showing interest in these games were also considered a threat to the Ottoman rule.

After the Association Law came into force, all football clubs became legal entities, which had to be registered to local government authorities. Therefore, they became a part of the Ottoman legal system. They had to submit annual financial reports, needed to register their members (therefore list their players and supporters), and were required to register for events they organise (Velidedeoğlu and Atay 1956). Being a legal entity may seem to restrict the free movement of clubs and players, but there was a major upside. The clubs and their players were registered into the system; therefore, they became legal entities and football was allowed to be played by the Muslim population. This led to a huge increase in demand to play and watch football. The oldest football clubs of Turkey, Beşiktaş (1903), Galatasaray (1905), and Fenerbahçe (1907) were all founded during this transition period and became the leading examples of Turkish football's growth.

In 1910, a second football league was created in Istanbul: *Istanbul Futbol Kulüpleri Ligi* (IFKL, Istanbul Football Clubs League). Still, the league had no legal background but all the member clubs were associations. The founder clubs were Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray, Progress, Kadıköy, and Strugglers (Özelçi 2010). It was a bigger organisation than its predecessor – the Istanbul Futbol Birliği. Local fans were showing more interest in football matches because there were Turkish teams playing against non-Muslim teams. These were the times right before the First World War, and when a Turkish team, more importantly a Muslim team, beat a non-Muslim team, it would be a major reason for national celebration (Fişek 2003). These years were the foundation stones for 'Three Big Clubs' of Turkey to receive the immense support they are still having today. According to Fişek (2003),

the foundations of this huge support also came from the triumphs of these clubs against non-Turkish and non-Muslim teams, which occupied Istanbul during the 1910s. According to Yamak (2002), during this invasion period, Fenerbahçe played 50 games against the teams of the invading British army and won 41, lost 5, and drew 4. This major success encouraged the local public, which during those times had no other strength to hold on to. These wins were one of the main reasons that Fenerbahçe's supporter base grew rapidly.

1923–1986: Turkish Sport Getting Organised

According to Fişek (2003), until 1923 the only organised sport in Turkey was football and the leagues were mainly organised in Istanbul. So there was only one single localised sport system. This did not mean that no other sports were played around the country. Especially individual sports such as wrestling and archery were very common pastime events around Anatolia.

In 1923, Turkey's first national multi-sport organisational body was established: *Türkiye Idman Cemiyetleri Ittifakı* (TICI, Turkey Training Associations Union). TICI was a revolutionary move for Turkish sport because it was also the first legal body that was recognised by the Turkish government and also had the authority and responsibility to represent Turkish sport to the world. Therefore, an established sporting system came into force but still led by the most popular sport, football (Akın 2004).

TICI brought another dimension to sport governance in Turkey. Before 1923 all competitions and related football events had been organised by local leagues and their sub-committees, which consisted only of players. Club captains and club presidents were usually the same person and the players were managing most of the administrative work themselves. Therefore, the players also made all the managerial decisions. According to Özelçi (2010), it was a fully democratic system. Within TICI this managerial control started to shift from the players' side to the administrative side. TICI was still the most democratic sport institution in Turkish sport history with clear election procedures of the

general assembly, which consisted of the clubs. Therefore, the players still had a say over how things were run in football.

TICI was the turning point from a totally voluntary administrative system to a more professional, multi-sport, and multi-layered administrative system with elected officials and paid professionals. With more people involved in organised sport came more intervention and more investment from the government. Therefore, sport became a focal point for the Turkish government to reach the masses.

Soon after the Turkish Independence War (1919–1923) ended, a new republic was born. Sport, especially football, was a very easy way to reach the masses. Therefore, it was a very useful tool for the government to spread their ideology. The Turkish government invested substantially in different kinds of sports, especially Olympic sports in order to be recognised in the international sphere. Following a well-known path that can be found also nowadays in cases such as Kosovo, the new Turkish republic hoped that sport achievements would demonstrate Turkey's status as an independent country instead of being a successor to the Ottoman Empire. TICI was given a budget by the government to attend the 1924 Olympic Games in order to achieve this goal.

But government support was a double-edged sword. Advantages for the sporting side were obvious, such as the growing monetary support and the use of the power of national and local governmental bodies to reach the masses in order to spread nationwide and have higher participation numbers in various sports. But the downside was that all kinds of sports were getting more and more popular amongst the Turkish public and this popularity was something that the government would want to keep under control. Until the *Türk Spor Kurumu* (TSK, Turkish Sport Organization) was established in 1936, the government's grasp around TICI was increasingly tighter (Fişek 2003).

The TSK was a transitional period that lasted only two years. But it represented the government's growing influence over Turkish sport. One great example for this transition would be the acceptance of a new resolution that made the TSK a sub-organisation of the ruling political party, *Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi* (CHP, Republican People's Party) instead of being an independent sports governing body. The independence of sports governance was gone (Özelçi 2010).

In 1938, the government passed the first law on the establishment of a national sport organisation: *Beden Terbiyesi Kanunu* (Physical Education Law). This law gave the government the legitimacy to rule all sports activities in Turkey. Until 1986, this law was the foundation of how sport federations and other administrative sports organisations were run (Akin 2004). In 1986, the law was changed to *Gençlik ve Spor Genel Müdürlüğü* (GSGM, Youth and Sports General Directorate) Law, which was actually nothing more than an update of the name of and some minor changes of the clauses of the previous law.

Between 1934 and 1986, the Turkish sport system switched from being an independent system run by volunteers to a publicly financed, politically oriented and professionalised organisation (Irak 2013). Furthermore, in 1951, the Turkish Football Federation accepted professionalism and allowed clubs to sign contracts with their players and pay them legally. This approach also constitutes the foundations of football economy in Turkey (Tunç 2014).

1986–2014: Globalisation and the Independence of Turkish Football

After the update of the Sport Law of Turkey in 1986, football welcomed its first opportunity to break apart from the GSGM system. In 1992, a separate establishment law was accepted just to separate the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) in order to give football its independence within the Turkish sports system. Therefore, more private investments could be drawn to football and all the administrative procedures would be out of the government's reach. This change pushed football in Turkey to grow faster.

Following the establishment law of football in Turkey, the Football Federation took control of all its finances. Instead of waiting for their share of the public funding provided by the GSGM, they began to have investors and sponsors lined up to be a part of the new football industry that started to develop. In 2009, a new law of establishment for football was passed by the government and the system that is currently applied was established. The TFF has its own independent disciplinary and

appeal bodies, its own broadcasting funds, betting funds, and sponsors. According to Radikal Newspaper (2010), the TFF became the fifth biggest football league in Europe in revenues thanks to the €288m broadcasting deal with Digiturk Broadcasting Company. In November 2016, a new broadcasting deal was made worth \$590m/year for the broadcasting rights of the Turkish Super League and the Division One (TFF 2016).

In 2011, another major change occurred in Turkish sport when the independent ruling sport authority of Turkey, the GSGM, was positioned under the newly created Ministry of Youth and Sports. This has not much changed how sport federations were governed, only proved once again that sport in Turkey would be run directly by the government, except football, which has its own independent federation.

With growing financial support – the broadcasting rights – and governmental backing strengthened by laws, the football federation and the clubs have decreased interest towards meeting the fans' needs and desires. They had the money and they had the ruling power, why would they need to listen to the fans? But there was a way for the fans to be heard: protests against the authorities (both sporting and government), and violence.

Football Supporters: The Only Cause of Violence?

Since 1992 the Turkish Football Federation changed its statutes, rules, regulations, and its committee structure many times to improve its governing efficiency. Over the years only one thing has not improved, if not even worsened: the relationship between the TFF and clubs on the one hand, and football supporters on the other.

In 2004, a law was enacted by the Turkish government to prevent hooliganism and bring order to sport in general. This was the first time for the Turkish football that the issue of violence and disorder was officially acknowledged and acted against. The law was named *Spor Müsabakalarında Şiddet ve Düzensizliğin Önlenmesine Dair Kanun* (The Law of Preventing Violence and Disorder in Sports Games, Law No: 5149). The general idea behind its implementation was that hard-core fans were the reasons for all the violence and disorder in

sports games all over the country (T.C. Law No 5149 2009). Therefore, Law 5149 was enacted in order to allow local and national courts to prosecute those who cause violence and/or disorder at sports matches. Unfortunately, Law 5149 had very limited effect because in its entirety it only specified the roles and responsibilities of the federations, clubs, supporters, and fan groups. But it did have very limited sanctioning power, therefore nothing changed.

In March 2011, another law was enacted by the government with the same purpose but with many different clauses. Law 6222, *Sporda Şiddet ve Düzensizliğin Önlenmesine Dair Kanun* (The Law of Preventing Violence and Disorder in Sport) introduced severe sanctioning powers over the individuals who violate its contents. For example, a jail sentence of 5–12 years could be given to those who would take part in match-fixing. But when the match-fixing scandal was revealed on 3 July 2011, the severity of this clause became a major discussion topic. Consequently, that clause was altered to 1–3 years of jail sentence from the original 5–12 years.

Putting the match-fixing clause aside, this law has one very important clause: the Electronic Ticketing System Clause. Article 5(4) of Law 6222 compels the federations and clubs to create an e-ticketing system and force supporters to buy them in order to attend the games. This system was put into practice in April 2014 only for football's first and second divisions but it will be used in all sports eventually because it is written in the law that it is created for all sports. A comparison between the 2004 law and the 2011 law clearly reveals that the main differences are the details added to the paragraphs that deal with supporter activism. And the main solution the law offers – other than many sanctions – was to create an electronic ticketing system that will prevent supporters from being violent or disorderly before, during and after the games (T.C. Law No 6222 2011). All the responsibility of the controlling mechanisms (such as checking the identity of card owner, making sure that everybody sit at the spots stipulated on their tickets, and removing spectators that cause trouble from the stands) was attributed to the home team which was the same before the e-ticketing system and before the law. Therefore, on paper there were some changes but when it comes to reality, the procedures and the people who enforce these procedures stayed the same.

Cooperation Instead of Sanctions and Exclusion

The implementation of the e-ticketing system (known as *Passolig*) caused major protests all over the country and the movement has been growing since. Turkey could not be considered one of the leading countries when it comes to average attendance numbers at football matches. But with this new system, according to an analysis conducted by Futbolekonomi.com (2014), the number of supporters going to the stadiums to watch the games has decreased by 47.9 per cent after the e-ticketing system became mandatory, mainly because of the protesting supporters who refused to buy these e-tickets or had bought the cards but then decided not to attend.

By implementing the e-ticketing system, sport and state authorities have adopted a legal approach to fans, framing them as criminals rather than stakeholders or participants in sport. Yet the more fans are oppressed by the police forces and by the laws and regulations, the more incidents tend to happen. This has proven to be a vicious circle that has not contributed to eradicating the protests or violence issues, because more policing has only strengthened the fans' reactions against the sport and state authorities.

It is suggested that, following examples elsewhere in Europe, in order to change this ineffective approach, fans should be given the opportunity to get more involved within the administrative processes of the teams they support. As described before, fans are the major source of income for their clubs directly and indirectly. Therefore, they should have a say in how their clubs are run.

In the Turkish example, clubs are formed as associations that are legally open to all persons who want to register. But each club has its own statute in which how this registration procedure works or even who are eligible to that specific club are specified. In other words, even though it seems to be a democratic system, because of the limitations that the clubs write in their statutes, fans cannot enjoy becoming a member of their beloved club and cast a vote during the general assembly as easily as it seems.

The English Supporter Ownership Model

In the case of English football governance model, the clubs are mostly public limited companies (PLCs) since they were founded as early as in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, every football club's shares can be sold and bought by public and private persons. In this way, one individual can own the club (for example, Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich owning Chelsea FC) or many individuals can carry many shares of a single club. One notable example for the latter ownership method is the Swansea City Football Club of English Premier League in which 21 per cent of the share of the club is owned by the Swansea City Supporters Society Limited (Swansea FC Club Ownership 2014).

Using supporter ownership models, supporters of a particular club may have the chance to become a shareholder of the club they support. Until 2000 this opportunity did not have a major advantage for fans because main shareholders in a club would still have the power in terms of majority voting and individual fans with small number of shares could hardly influence voting procedures.

Starting in the early 1990s and reaching a climax in 2000, the Supporters Direct movement has changed the way football clubs are run in Great Britain. With the government backing Supporters Direct, the supporters trusts started to be formed by the fans who were individual shareholders of their clubs. With one share, a supporter would not have much power at the management of the club. But when many of these 'one share' shareholders come together within the supporters' trusts, a major shareholder entity can be formed. There are many examples of supporters coming together, buying shares, raising funds, and saving their clubs in return of their involvement in clubs' decision-making processes. One of the most notable examples of this movement is the Bournemouth Football Club and the story of Trevor Watkins, a simple fan who became the club president by getting responsible fans organised around himself (Watkins 1999). This transition from being run by a bunch of shareholder executives or a single individual to a more responsible and participatory model of getting fans involved is no easy task. Hamil et al. (2001) explained this process by a historical timeline and best examples.

The first successful example of supporter ownership model had been discernible before it was accepted as a football governance model in England. In 1992, a fourth division team called Northampton Town FC entered a financial difficulty with a debt over £1.6m. The club had been in hardship for two years and none of the solutions the board had identified turned out to be effective to save the club. Only then the fans of Northampton Town FC created the Northampton Town Supporters' Trust, which raised money to save the club and also sought effective involvement and representation for supporters in the running of the club in order to ensure that such a crisis situation would never occur again.

The Trust was successful in raising the funds needed by using a dual approach strategy. They campaigned for change and they raised the funds in public while in private negotiating with the club's creditors, the Football League, and the Professional Footballers' Association. In this way, the Trust was able to establish its credentials within the first three months to play its part in the running of the club.

Fundraising activities were spontaneous. Fans went to pubs, schools, private clubs, workplaces, homes, and all other places where a donation could be found in order to save their club. A bucket collection of £3,500 was collected after the first home game. When the chairman of the club tried in vain to prevent supporters from raising funds for the trust because he did not believe that fans could run their clubs and take up responsibility, this only added to the legitimacy of the Trust in the eyes of the undecided supporters and consequently prompted more people to donate to the Trust.

In short, the first of its kind, the Northampton Town Supporter Trust was a huge success. After a brief period of fighting the chairman gave in and let the administration run the club. The administrator Barry Ward met the Trust representatives and two elected Trust officials were included in the executive board of the club. Fans began to have the say in their club's management. With the support of the administration the Trust used their funds to help their club diminish its debt. This method was immediately acknowledged by many other clubs such as Kettering Town, Middlesbrough, Plymouth Argyle, and AFC Wimbledon (Hamil et al. 2001).

The Turkish Case: Fans with Voting Powers

In the Turkish case, as explained above, clubs are associations with their general assemblies deciding on the strategic issues such as budgeting, investments, and long-term plans. According to the Turkish Associations Law (T.C. Law No 5253 2014), a general assembly consists of individual members who have one vote each, and every four years they vote to elect an executive committee to represent them within the club and to make short- and middle-term decisions. The general assembly has the power to go to elections at any time if enough signatures are collected.

This system seems in principle to be beneficial to fans who are members of their respective clubs. They can vote on important decisions such as budgeting and long-term administrative decisions. But the problem resides in how to become a member of these clubs. All of the clubs are associations; therefore, they need to have statutes that stipulate how to become a member of a particular club. In most cases, there are severe limitations on how to become a member.

In order to understand the difficulties in becoming a member of a sports club, the three biggest football clubs' statutes will be analysed: Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe, and Beşiktaş. In the Galatasaray case, according to the Statutes (Galatasaray 2013), in order for an applicant to become a member of the Galatasaray Sports Club, he/she has to belong to one of the five categories detailed in the statutes. The first category is the Galatasaray High-School Graduates; the second is the Club President's recommendations (up to 15 people per year); the third one is the amateur or professional athletes who have played at least five years for Galatasaray and retired from the club within the last five years; the fourth is the children or spouses of members who have been a member for at least five years; and the fifth category is every individual who does not fall into the aforementioned four categories and may therefore be summarised as 'the rest'. There are also limitations on how many people from each category would be accepted annually. In sum, it is not very easy to become a member of Galatasaray even if you have money to invest in the club or consider yourself the biggest fan of the club.

This elimination system is not an issue confined to Galatasaray. Many other clubs have different kinds of limitations within their statutes in order to prevent certain kinds of people from becoming members of that particular club, which makes it easier to control and manipulate the voting members.

In the Fenerbahçe Statutes (Fenerbahçe 2014), there are two types of membership: full membership and representative membership. To become a full member, the applicant has to pay 10,000 Turkish Liras (around €3,300) to the club and also seek support from two current club members as guarantors for her/him. Therefore, anyone who wants to become a member of Fenerbahçe needs to know at least two members that can sign a guarantor agreement for him or her. Full members have the power of giving votes at general assemblies.

The representative membership is a cheaper and easier method of becoming a member of Fenerbahçe SK. The applicant has to pay 2,000 TL (around €630) but does not need to show any guarantors to apply for representative membership. However, representative members do not have the eligibility to attend the general assemblies of the club, and therefore they have no say over management issues of the club. Still they can use the facilities and other rights that the full members enjoy.

The third example is from another Istanbul team: Beşiktaş JK. In comparison with the other two big Istanbul clubs, Beşiktaş membership is rather cheaper and easier to access. According to the Beşiktaş Statutes (Beşiktaş 2015), any applicant can pay 2,000 TL to become a full member of the club. But still the applicant needs two guarantors who have to be members of the club for at least five years, to sign for him or her. Therefore, even though the fee is relatively accessible, the applicant still needs to know or find someone from the club as a guarantor in order to be a part of it.

In the end, usually the majority of the supporters, who are also the biggest revenue gates for the club, are generally kept away from the general assemblies of the club and thus the decision-making processes.

Supporter Collaboration: International Examples

The supporter ownership model may have been invented and first implemented in England but it is not confined to it anymore. After the establishment of Supporters Direct (SD) in 2000 by the English government, the supporter trust model quickly spread to the other home nations of the United Kingdom and also to mainland Europe in due time. Therefore, Supporters Direct Europe was created in 2007 in order to help other European fan groups and clubs who are eager to apply supporter ownership methods.

Every football system has its own specificities but when it comes to club mismanagement, financial debts, low levels of supporter collaboration, and league governance, there tend to be more similarities than differences. In almost every country, there are many teams with huge debts that they cannot pay back anymore or there are club owners/presidents who tend to spend more money than they have or will ever have. Therefore, many aspects of the supporter ownership model tend to work at a multinational level. SD Europe became the first inter-European organisation that addresses the problems of all fans around Europe (Supporters Direct Europe 2014).

Supporters Direct Europe is a part of the English Supporter Direct initiative. Therefore, it is accountable to and funded by the UK government. This attachment prevents it from being the ultimate supporter organisation throughout Europe and it also opens the door for the Football Supporters Europe (FSE) initiative to become the most established Europe-wide fan organisation. FSE was founded in 2008 and it is the only organisation that is officially recognised and even supported by UEFA. FSE's main purpose is to organise supporters from all over Europe against the main issues they face. Some of the major issues are racism, intolerance, violence, police brutality, political oppression, the rights of disabled supporters, safe standing, and so on.

Membership of FSE was made open to fans as individuals, as well as to fan groups organised at local and national levels, and democratic elections were held to appoint a committee to further develop the

network. The first Europe-wide campaigning activities were launched, and in a significant milestone FSE has been recognised by UEFA as their European dialogue partner on supporters issues. The FSE committee is composed of the members elected at each year's European Football Fans' Congress (EFFC), together with representatives from the Hamburg-based co-ordination office and from the FSE 'on-topic divisions', the semi-autonomous departments charged with responsibility for the development of specific areas of work undertaken by the FSE, in addition to usual working groups. These departments are currently the Disabled Fans' Rights Division, and the Fans' Embassy Division that co-ordinates the work of Fans' Embassy teams particularly but not exclusively for fans of national teams.

According to the FSE Statutes (Football Supporter Europe, 2014), one of the most important aspects of the FSE is its Fans' Embassy division. Fans' Embassy is the name that has been given to an advice, information, and support service for football supporters travelling to an away game or an international tournament in a foreign country. The provision of an embassy service forms a very constructive and positive part of the hospitality programme at an international tournament. The most essential feature of an embassy service is the provision of accurate, reliable, up-to-date, independent, and objective information on any matters of interest to football fans.

Fans' Embassies also provide information that is tailored to the specific fields of interest of football supporters, such as information about international fan culture and alternative activities in the host cities. Fans' Embassies provide help and assistance in case of emergency (physical violence, theft, etc.) and can be addressed as mediators in conflict situations.

According to FSE Statutes (Football Supporter Europe, 2014), the most powerful aspect of the FSE is that it provides education and support to fans all over Europe about their rights with regard to their clubs, federations, and even governments. This power comes from its democratic and transparent membership style. There are three levels of membership in the FSE: individual member, fan group member, and national fan group member. Each member/group has its voting rights during the general assembly and therefore decides on what matters most

for the fans around Europe. And because UEFA officially recognises it, it is easier to be heard by governing body of European football.

The SD and the FSE models of supporter involvement offer an alternative for the Turkish football clubs and their supporters that there are working models of supporter–club interaction methods in which supporters will have more say and involvement in their clubs' management and in the end both sides will benefit. Especially FSE is working closely with many Turkish fan organisations such as the *Taraftar Hakları Derneği* (THD, Supporters Rights Association) and *Taraftar Hakları Dayanışma Derneği* (THDD, Supporters Rights Solidarity Association) by organising conferences and networking events to teach their models of fan-ownership both to Turkish football fans and the sports and government authorities. One of the examples for these kinds of events is the FSE Summer Network Meeting organised by the FSE with the support of the THD and THDD held in Izmir in July 2016, in which supporter organisations, individual fans, federation authorities, and international supporters came together and discussed current football issues,¹ violence and disorder being one of the major topics.

Conclusion: Stronger Supporter Participation

There is no one simple solution to the violence issue in football. The main problem rests on the non-participation of supporters in their clubs' decision-making processes. Some fans are positioned at one end of the violence and disorder phenomenon. But the authorities do not pay attention to those fans on the opposite side, which do not engage in violent behaviour. Instead of trying to sanction all fans for the violence caused by a few, the football authorities should look at the alternative of empowering those supporters with good behaviour to get more involved in their club's management processes. This would be positive and proactive thinking, rather than focusing just on the negative and reactive method of punishments.

¹ See details under <http://www.fseizmir2016.org/>.

The proposal of this chapter is to give representation to fans organisations within the executive committees of the clubs without expecting the fans to be members of a particular club. The supporter representatives at the committee should also be elected by the fans organisations rather than selected or appointed by the club in order to be more democratic. These representatives may or may not have a voting power within the system as long as they have a right to listen and have a say on the club's management issues. The basic problem of this proposal is the difficulty of choosing who will represent the fans especially in the case of the club having more than one supporter organisation. Yet, this will also be an opportunity for these organisations to interact with each other and collaborate democratically instead of dividing their power. By this way an effective communication line can be opened between the club and its fans. This communication line would resolve many existing problems derived from the misinformation or lack of information between the club and its fans.

If both sides take steps towards each other to resolve the violence and disorder problem within sports in general, then the hooligan minority would have to get exposed and diminish in numbers throughout the way. Although it is not as easy as it sounds, still the solution to violence and disorder would not come from more punishments or more oppression; but from the interaction and mutual respect between fans on the one hand, and the club and federations on the other.

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14

Conclusions: The Rising Importance of Supporter Activism in European Football

Jinming Zheng and Borja García

It has been pointed out repeatedly by academics and practitioners over the last few years (see e.g. Conn 1997; Giulianotti 2005; Hamil 1999; Hamil et al. 2000; Hudson 2001) the danger of an increasingly 'remote' relationship between football clubs in Europe and their fans or supporters as a consequence of the commercialisation or the commodification of football. One of the first academics to fully articulate that transformation was probably Anthony King (2002), who suggested more than a decade ago that the commercialisation of club football was resulting in significant

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changes in the forms of fandom, including the emergence of the new consumer fans. King (2002: 209) argued that 'large capitalist interests are gaining increasing political, economic and affective hold over individuals who are becoming not primarily citizens of a nation state but consumers of a corporation'. In general, a pessimistic view regarding supporters' marginal and passive role has been prevalent over the past few years.

However, the activism of numerous supporters' organisations around Europe, headed by Supporters Direct Europe and Football Supporters Europe has started to yield some credible results. This has attracted the attention of policy-makers, football governance stakeholders and, as this book now clearly reflects, academics. This collective volume is the first attempt to bring together research from different parts of Europe on supporter activism, in order to understand the divergence and convergence of those dynamics, and the extent to which supporters are being heard by the political and football authorities. Most research until now has focused on single and small case studies, the largest part of which has been focusing on Britain. The 12 cases in this book are clear evidence of an increasingly active and significant role of supporters in the management of clubs across a wide range of nations. Not only that; the chapters in this book also point to a variety of areas in which the supporters are having an impact, from the more usual role in club governance and/or ownership, to the fostering of inclusivity in the stands or even the commercial development of the club's television channel. Supporters' simultaneous, and often organised, efforts and collective actions to raise their voice and get involved in club affairs are evident in both the dominant leagues of England, Spain, Germany and Italy, and peripheral regions including former Communist Bloc countries (such as Poland, the Czech Republic or Croatia) and Turkey. This, to some extent, demonstrates a trend of convergence in supporter engagement in football clubs in Europe. Also, there is evidence of the development of pluralistic characteristics in European club football, most visible in the participation of transgender spectators and their certain degree of satisfaction with club supporting and football watching. In addition, some clubs, for example Benfica, established its own TV to broadcast football matches, make a profit and communicate with football fans, which is a recent development in terms of football broadcasting.

There are several factors contributing to these developments. The most important factor is the development of commercialisation, commodification and marketisation of club football, and the increasingly evident tension between these football clubs and their supporters. The tension between the political and economic interests of football on the one hand, and its cultural tradition and function on the other, results in many supporters', most notably 'die-hard' supporters' dissatisfaction and their concomitant unified actions to oppose 'modern football', to save their beloved football clubs out of mismanagement and financial quandary. Crises of football clubs, most notably financial insolvency, provided supporters with golden opportunities to 'penetrate' into club affairs and in some cases get involved in decision-making process. Supporters' voluntary fund-raising activities are the most pervasive form of supporter engagement in and contribution to their clubs, as evident in the cases mentioned in England, Italy, the Czech Republic and Poland in this book. One of the strongest incentives to get engaged is a shared feeling of local identity.

Football Fans: Higher Profile, but Still a Marginal Voice?

However, despite these positive signs of development, supporters' role in club management and in particular the decision-making process of clubs remains marginal. First, all of the aforementioned examples of supporters' active participation and engagement are confined to non-top clubs of non-top leagues. In other words, the role of supporters in club management and decision-making remains significantly minimal in the clubs of first divisions of almost all nations studied and except for the German Bundesliga, or the Spanish cases of C.A. Osasuna, Athletic Bilbao, Real Madrid and Barcelona FC, there is hardly evidence of supporters' ability to influence club decision-making and management in other high-profile clubs in Europe. Even the more 'democratic' Spanish model does not represent a mainstream phenomenon because *socio* ownership and democratic president election is only evident in four Spanish clubs. Moreover, as the chapter

on C.A. Osasuna has pointed out, the *socio* model is not without its problems and the real power of the *socios* can ultimately be questioned.

Second, despite these positive developments of supporter engagement, there is a wide variation between clubs and nations. This is hardly surprising, given the heterogeneity of supporter cultures across Europe. More importantly, despite the many examples of supporters' contributions, few of them have obtained actual power to participate in decision-making and ownership. As reflected in the Italian cases, club owners tend to be reluctant to share ownership or include supporters in the decision-making process despite their certain degree of reliance on supporters' financial donations. More inspiring examples can be found in Bohemians Prague 1905 in the Czech Republic and Lechia Gdansk in Poland, though, where supporters successfully resisted club owners' decision and now occupy a significant position in club's decision-making and management. In brief, collective group actions including supporters' trusts have been proven an effective way to integrate supporters' resources and strive for a greater say, as strongly advocated by Burnham (2000). It is evident from the cases of this book that it is better for supporters to work collectively through good organisation and the proper use of professional skills, which echoes Crick's (2000) lesson learned from the experience of collective opposition to Murdoch.

However, supporters' decision-making power remains small in comparison to other stakeholders most notably the club owners, entrepreneurs and sponsors, broadcasters, the governing bodies and players (in particular, top players) (Crowther 2000; King 2002; Malcolm 2000) within 'the football figuration' (Clarke 1992, quoted in Malcolm 2000: 102). It is possible to argue that supporters' involvement in the governance of football clubs remains sporadic and fans remain 'the least powerful persons in the football figuration' (Dunning 1999: 126, quoted in Malcolm 2000: 102).

In order to obtain explanations, it is necessary to note the differences regarding supporter engagement between different national contexts. This, of course, makes holistic analysis extremely difficult. Yet, the chapters in this book allow us to identify meaningful dynamics. Supporters' involvement in the governance of football clubs, including top clubs, is both more traditional and significant in Germany and Spain (Brown and Walsh 2000), while it is confined to clubs in the lower leagues in England and is very recent and

limited in Italy. This is a very recent sphere of action for civil society activism, and as such is only developing. In addition, there are noteworthy differences regarding supporters' involvement between Western European nations, with a longer tradition of civil society participation, and the more recent democracies established in former Communist countries. The former's limited degree of supporter participation is often related to the dominance of economic groups and commercialisation and commodification of football, while for the latter, where the degree of commercialisation is lower, the 'stifled' governance system often resonates with the Communist relics of a centralised and less democratic but more bureaucratic system as well as corruption and less visible decision-making processes. Yet, it is interesting to note that the end of Communism, the transition to market economy and the decline of state power in some clubs confer the opportunity on supporters to be engaged in clubs' decision-making, as evidenced in the cases in Czech Republic and Poland. Last, even in the clubs where there is a membership system which allows fan representation and participation in club affairs, the threshold for 'entry' is high and concomitantly supporters' participation is limited and conditional, which hardly threatens club owners' interests, as evident in some major clubs in Turkey.

The explanations of the limited, sporadic, conditional and often rhetorical supporter engagement lie in (a) club owners' reluctance to devolve or share power with fans and their unwillingness to include supporters in the decision-making in order to maximise and defend their own interests (in many cases, club owners show no interest in sharing ownership, which is evidently illustrated by the Italian cases); and (b) the question over the sustainability of supporters' interest in managing football clubs and the disincentives for their lasting commitment rather than temporary interest because of the high time and financial cost.

One Model Does Not Necessarily Fit All

Perhaps one of the most innovative findings of this volume is a clear problematisation of the widely accepted idea that football clubs owned by their members are necessarily more open, transparent and democratic than those adopting the form of a private limited company with

shareholders. The different contributions in the volume seem to speak to one another in order to suggest that member clubs in Spain or even in Germany, which is normally acknowledged as the beacon of supporter activism, see the impact of the fans in the decision-making of the club severely reduced when properly scrutinised. Whereas the structures might be prone to participation, the way in which they are implemented are not always as conducive to 'supporter power' as we are led to believe.

To further complicate the debate, the two contributions from Croatia suggest that, actually, in that country it is easier for supporters to bring a club's hierarchy to account under a private company model with shareholders than under the traditional membership club model.

This is highly relevant both to academics and policy-makers. In both cases, the contributions in this volume suggest that it is necessary to go beyond the theoretical structures of the different club ownership and supporter participation models in Europe. Research needs to dig deeper into the actual roles of stakeholders and the perceptions of both club management/owners and supporters of their respective roles. It is also very important, perhaps for policy-makers even more than for academics, to face these debates without prejudices. As this book demonstrates, the British supporters trust model is being exported to several European countries. The contributions of Osvaldo Croci on Italy and Dino Numerato on the Czech Republic are very illustrative to that extent. However, the authors also warn about the features of the model that do not seem to work. Thus, it is necessary to recognise that structures are not good or bad, *per se*, in order to facilitate supporter engagement that brings the club hierarchy to account. As Sean Hamil has aptly argued recently, the reality is that 'there is no substitute to good management' and that may come from an open membership structure or from a private limited company.

Supporter Activism Beyond Governance

In addition to supporter involvement and participation, there are other problems that contemporary football development in Europe confronts. Giulianotti (1999) pointed out problems ranging from longstanding hooliganism, racism and other forms of discrimination

against minority groups (including LGBTQI such as transgender fans discussed in this book), to gender and class issues, many of which are discussed in detail in this book. The cases presented in this volume provide some promising solutions to these problems. First, inter-regional and transnational cooperation is highly demanded to address hooliganism and discrimination. Not only are national football governing bodies and member clubs responsible for these issues but also cooperation at EU level is needed, and UEFA is expected to fulfil a role within the context of a growing European integration of football in conjunction with an increased transnational movement of supporters. Second, as reflected in the Turkish context, a bottom-up approach which fully mobilises and harnesses the role of supporters should be adopted and may enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of anti-hooligan policies, in addition to the traditional top-down approach led by the government and governing bodies. Equally importantly, education, and incentives and inducements should be used in addition to the often-used coercive policy instrument of sanctions and punishments. Third, it is evident from the Croatian case that the tension between supporters of 'rival' clubs can be effectively mitigated if these supporters face a common enemy, for example, corruption. Similar cooperation between supporters representing 'rival' or different clubs can also be achieved in the case of the matches of the National Teams where they share the same national identity.

The future of the governance of football clubs in Europe depends on the relative significance between the three aspects of football in general and club football in particular: its political salience and system, economic interests, and cultural function and tradition. According to Millward (2011: 186), supporters' collective action to get involved in club affairs and their resistance to clubs' decisions are in many cases a demonstration of football supporters' desires to 'regain a sense of fans' cultural ownership of the club and the need to bring this back to the locality of the "space of places" rather than existing in the commercial and depersonalised "space of flows" where the club was for sale to whoever offered the most money'.

Whether supporters will gain a more powerful position in the management of their clubs and decision-making power, or even share the ownership, depend on whether and to what extent football can return to a culturally embedded and supporter-centred game against the background

of (1) the prevalence of commercial, market, commodified and mediatised elements permeating European club football in general and major leagues in particular; and (2) the still evident centralised, bureaucratic and corruptive elements and even government intervention in the governance of football in many of the more recent democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. However, rather than seeing the marketisation, commercialisation, commodification and mediatisation of club football as negative, it is more constructive to see them as a double-edged sword – which, on the one hand, marginalised the role and engagement of supporters, but on the other, opened the door for supporter contributions and involvement, prompted by the financial crisis and insolvency of some football clubs as per the ‘market rule’. Fans are clearly more than mere passive consumers. They are active participants, the ‘heart and soul’ (Burnham 2000: 45) property and ‘lifeblood’ (Brooking 2000: 27) of football clubs.

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