

## **The impact of international football events on local, national and transnational fan cultures: a critical overview**

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With the men's World Cup becoming a distant memory and the Club competitions in full swing, it's convenient to think that these competitions are distinct and separate. As the World Cup moves across the globe under the jurisdiction of FIFA, it does not operate in a vacuum. Club competitions may operate in fairly stable local, national and regional leagues and cups, but many of their fans also support national teams. The opportunities for fans to meet, share ideas and put ideas they've implemented at club level into the international arena are manifest. Media images are replete with fans socialising in fan embassies, or engaging in hooliganism. In this way, localised aspects of fan culture can enter the international arena. Yet the impact on fans is not restricted to club fans influencing the support of national teams. Ideas, laws and redevelopments introduced in international competition can significantly impact how Club fans maintain their supporter culture, as this special issue will highlight.

World Cups, European Championships, Olympic Games and to some extent even Under 21 tournaments attract a lot of international attention. Hosting countries generally want to use the events to show their modernity, their functionality and their attractiveness for further projects. Thus, they have led to fundamental changes in most of the hosting countries, concerning the infrastructure of their professional football and its environment. Looking in retrospect at the tournaments of the past decades, a conversion of the infrastructure in general as well as a modernization of the stadiums can be seen, and in many cases it has acted as a catalyst to commercialise the sport in the individual country.

This collection of articles is the first time the impact of International tournaments on local supporters has been considered. It is clear that the dynamics of the relationships vary depending on local and national context, the type of competition and the wider political context. Yet there are some similarities. All of the articles in this special issue are about fans of men's teams and the impact of men's competitions. Except for one on supporters in the US, all are about European fans. And all result in the impact of FIFA Competitions, except the one on English teams (after the 2002 Commonwealth Games and London 2012). As Sugden and Tomlinson (1999) highlight, FIFA have actively used the men's World Cup to globalise the sport and increase the potential market for sponsors and media.

There are two clear drivers for many of the changes introduced by international competitions: commercialisation and hooliganism. The political economic transformation of football since the 1990s has had a significant impact on local supporter culture (King 1998; 2003; Gulianotti 1999; Sandvoss 2004; Gabler 2010; Millward 2011; Doidge 2015a; Claus

2017; Cleland et al 2018). Many fans have mobilised politically to counter some of the changes that have been introduced. Some of these changes are specifically related to the issue of security and authorities' attempts to reduce hooliganism at football. What can be seen from the case studies in this special issue is that transnational competitions provide opportunities to introduce new laws that can restrict a culture long after the competition has ended.

### **The importance of Sport Mega Events**

Sport mega-events (SME) have long been vehicles of national identity. Pierre de Coubertin envisaged the Olympic Games to be a space where nation-states could compete without resorting to war (Horne and Whannel 2016). International SME are overflowing with symbols of nationalism such as flags, anthems, team uniforms and images of fans in the stadium. International competition also provides a symbolic opportunity to present the nation as a physical and successful entity. Early Olympic Games were explicitly tied to international trade fairs that showcased the nation's economic prowess (Roche 2000). Both Hitler and Mussolini used the 1936 Olympics and 1938 World Cup respectively to present their physical ideals to the world stage (Foot 2006; Martin 2004; Boycoff 2016; Horne and Whannel 2016). Subsequent SME have equally tried to place the respect nations at the centre of the world map. As Hobsbawn (1992: 143) argues, football teams can make an 'imagined community of millions . . . [seem] more real as a team of eleven named people'.

SME have become globally significant social, economic, cultural, and political spectacles. There has been a noteworthy political economic transformation of SME since the 1980s as international sport governing bodies, notably the IOC and FIFA, have sought to generate revenue to maintain the interest and focus on the events (Tomlinson and Whannel 1984; Sugden and Tomlinson 1998; Tomlinson and Young 2006; Boycoff 2013; Horne and Whannel 2016). The restructuring of media and commercial partnerships has driven a more commercial approach as these transnational institutions seek to maximise the potential markets. In parallel, events like the Olympics, World Cups and European Championships are often presented as having significant economic impact, particularly around tourism, but also around infrastructure regeneration and urban development (Roche 2000; Horne and Whannel 2016). Host nations and cities seek to place themselves in the global spotlight as they try to present themselves in a positive light to a global audience.

The high cost associated with hosting an SME has attracted significant criticism. There is invariably a significant public investment in infrastructure from stadiums to transport links. Alongside housing and business developments may be built to further enhance the impression that the sporting spectacle has had a positive legacy for the investment. There has been a growth in critical analyses of the impact of SME on local communities (Boycoff 2013; Lenskyj 2002; Perryman 2013b; Horne and Whannel 2016). Most focus on the Olympic Games. Yet there have not been any concomitant studies of the impact on football fans before, during or after a World Cup or Regional Championship like the Euros. As the major stakeholder in the success of football, the voices of fans should be addressed.

Legacy discourses focussed on security have also increased, particularly since the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Once again, many of these have focussed on the Olympics (Bennett and Haggerty 2011; Fussey et al 2012; Giulianotti and Klauser 2012). Significant sums of money are budgeted to establish security measures and risk management procedures in order to deal with perceived and physical threats to spectators and athletes. Although hooliganism has been associated with football matches, both local and international for many years, there has been little research on the security measures imposed on football tournaments until Russia 2018 (Ludvigsen 2018; Wong and Chadwick 2017). As with the political discourses associated with SME security, these focus on the combined approach to tackle terrorism *and* hooliganism. In the process, football fans are seen not only as potential hooligans, but as potential terrorists.

### **Global Fan Cultures**

The study of football fandom and fan cultures has grown exponentially since the 1990s. Early studies of football fans centred on hooligans and violence (Taylor 1971; Marsh et al 1978; Williams et al 1984; Dunning et al 1988; Dal Lago 1990; Armstrong 1998). Later studies focused on the changing nature of fandom (King 1998; 2003; Giulianotti 1999; Sandvoss 2004; Russo 2005; Porro 2008; Gabler 2010; Millward 2011; Doidge 2015a; Cleland et al 2018). Football has undergone a significant economic transformation over this period. There has been a significant change in how football clubs are managed, with a growing focus on commercial and media growth. This has been achieved through stadium redevelopment, branding, and sponsorship (Bale 1993; King 1998; 2003; Giulianotti 1999; Doidge 2015a). Alongside these club developments, media contracts have exponentially increased as leagues seek to sell their product to a global audience. Both the Premier League and Champions League were formed in 1992 and these have acted as economic models that other major leagues have sought to emulate. These in turn were influenced by the economic transformation of the FIFA World Cup (Sugden and Tomlinson 1998).

Football fans have frequently mobilised in relation to these changes (King 1998; 2003; Millward 2011; Doidge 2015a; Cleland et al 2018). In the UK, Independent Supporters' Associations were formed throughout the 1990s to gain a voice for fans. These mobilisations could be due to stadium redevelopments or moves to challenging owners who wanted to move the club to a different town (such as Wimbledon or Brighton and Hove Albion). At the same time as these political economic transformations were being enacted, there was also a period of financial crisis with many clubs going into liquidation. Supporters' Trusts were established to raise funds to save clubs, and also to lobby for the voice of fans on the board (Cleland et al 2018). In contrast, German football was originally established as mutual associations which ensured that fans owned the club. As the Bundesliga sought to introduce a Premier League model into German football, they undertook a partial deregulation – the '50+1' rule - which meant that club members remain the major shareholders of a club (except for Wolfsburg and Bayer Leverkusen) (Merkel 2012). Whilst many of the members are fans, this does not automatically mean that all fans are shareholders, nor that members are active in the club.

Different nations have different forms of civil society and political engagement. Ownership in Italy has overwhelmingly been by rich entrepreneurs since the 1920s (Doidge 2015a). This

has led to a very different form of political engagement. In particular, the ultras style of fandom has led to a very confrontational approach with police and authorities (Doidge 2015a; Doidge and Lieser 2018). This confrontational approach has become a key part of the ultras style of fandom across Europe, particularly as they challenge the economic transformation of football through the 'Against Modern Football' movement (Kossakowski et al 2018; Nuhrat 2018; Perasovic and Mustapic 2018). Whilst this movement takes on some broad transnational similarities, it does not have any clear leadership, not strategic approaches, other than performative choreographies, banners and public marches.

Most of the analysis of football fan culture has been centred on club football. There is limited research on fans of national teams. Consequently, this special issue makes a significant contribution to understanding diverse national team fan cultures, as well as the impact of SME on localised fan groups. As Kossakowski and Louis in this issue highlight how fans of the national team are distinct from the hardcore fans that mobilise around club football. Perryman (2002; 2010; 2013a) has written extensively on England fans as he actively seeks to deconstruct the myth that they are just groups of hooligans. This image of England fans also appears in Giulianotti's (1991; 1995; 2005) work on Scotland's 'Tartan Army'. In one of the few analyses of international fans, Scotland fans seek to differentiate themselves from the symbolic image of English hooligans.

Hooliganism at international tournaments is one area that has not escaped academic analysis. Colloquially known as the "English Disease", hooliganism became inextricably linked to England fans. Indeed, Louis in this issue highlights how English fans travelling to Paris for the 1984 European Championships stimulated hooliganism in France. Williams, Dunning and Murphy (1984) applied their figurational analysis to England fans travelling across Europe. More recently, the work of Clifford Stott has applied social identity theory from social psychology to fandom to analyse the crowd dynamics in a variety of settings (Stott and Adang 2003; Stott, Hutchinson and Drury 2001; Stott and Pearson 2007; Stott and Reicher 1998). In particular, these works highlight the role of the police and the impact of perception on how football fans are policed. As many of the articles in this special issue relate to the impact of security, then this literature is crucial to critically evaluate the impact of legislation and police on football fans. As mentioned in the previous section, the voices of fans are absent from the literature on security and SME. We argue that this impact should be considered in policy recommendations associated with security at football tournaments.

### **The project**

This special issue emerged after discussions of members of the Football Supporters Europe (FSE) Fan Researchers group. This is a group of academics who are interested in fan activism across Europe. FSE is the pan-European fan network that brings together fans from across the continent to debate and challenge a wide range of issues affecting fans, from police repression to highlighting the contribution of female fans. The meeting that kicked off this special issue occurred in Belfast at the FSE Meeting in 2015. It very much progressed at the media suite of the Daknamstadion, home of the Belgian First Division side Lokeren, who were co-hosting the 2017 FSE Annual Congress with their rivals Gent. Through the conversations, it became apparent that fans have been significantly impacted by transnational competitions, and yet this had been overlooked academically.

The fan researchers group framed the outline of this special issue by asking the central question: what kind of impacts have international football tournaments of the past decades had on local, national and transnational fan cultures? The project was designed to be broad focused because we wanted to use the topic as an umbrella for a wide sample of articles, written by the researchers from a wide range of disciplinary and national backgrounds. We were keen to collect knowledge about the development of local, national and transnational fan cultures in Europe under the influence of professionalised mega events. The aim was to create a basis for further campaigns, inputs and interventions with regard to upcoming tournaments. By identifying the themes, similarities and differences, we could support fan activists in subsequent competitions, if required.

Overall, one of the most striking themes within these articles is that the nation-state is still the primary object of enquiry. Despite this special issue being about transnational competition, fans still predominantly organise locally and nationally. There is little evidence of transnational co-operation within these case studies. The only evidence of transnational interaction is through the direct confrontation of rival hooligans. Given that this special issue emerged from a transnational fans' congress, this may seem even more surprising. Yet FSE's membership is predominantly comprised of fans and fan groups who are aligned to clubs, rather than national teams. European football fandom, in particular, is still primarily focussed on club fandom. This is more pronounced in certain nations, such as Italy and Spain. Yet this special issue also highlights that participating in international competitions, both as host and visitor, can unify some national fans. In Poland, the Kossakowski article suggests they may be distinct from the hardcore fans of club sides. In Germany, Claus and Gabler, argue that the national team has been a strong unifier for far-Right nationalists, although hosting the 2006 tournament may have encouraged a different type of patriotism and fan culture. Similarly, in Portugal, Marivoet, Rosa and Silvério highlight how hosting the tournament in 2002 helped promote a sense of national pride for Portugal, and this carried on as an identifier for Portuguese fans in France in 2016. In contrast, the 1994 World Cup in the US helped stimulate interest in football and this has led to a localised sense of fandom. Potentially, there may need to be more transnational co-operation between fans of national teams based on some of the issues raised in this special issue, specifically around security.

### **The impact on fan cultures**

Alongside the political economic transformation of football and hooliganism, there are a number of other themes we have spotted within the articles. Clearly readers may spot their own themes, but we identify a number of key themes, many of which relate to the wider commercialisation and securitisation of football. Key events are utilised by both fans and authorities as key foci of mobilisation. Tournaments are liminal spaces where traditional boundaries and rivalries can be temporarily dissolved, but there are lasting changes after the tournament through security and anti-hooliganism legislation. Furthermore, the impact on fans from stadium redevelopments is also significant. Finally, the relatively late awareness on the impact on fans has seen the introduction of Supporters Liaison Officers and projects to engage fans. After outlining these key areas, this section will conclude with an overview of the articles contained within this special issue.

Key events are significant stimuli for change. It is unsurprising that extraordinary events can lead to political and social action. These events are likely to be highly emotive, after death, serious injury or sense of loss. The emotions stirred by such event help shape the substance and goals of the response (Crossley 2000; Jasper 2007). As Collins (1990: 28) argues, 'Emotions are 'the "glue" of solidarity – and what mobilises conflict'. These significant events can lead to increased legislation or a change in policing, which can lead to a reaction from fans. Or fans can mobilise around specific tragedies. For example, the Football Supporters' Association in England formed after the Heysel Stadium disaster (Taylor 1999).

The Heysel and Hillsborough tragedies in the 1980s acted as a catalyst for significant changes in the UK, which had a direct impact on fan culture (King 1998; Taylor 1999; Giulianotti 1999). Likewise, the deaths of two fans and a policeman after fan violence also unified Italian fans. The death of the Genoa ultra Vincenzo Spagnolo at the hands of a Milan fan in 1995 led to ultras working together for the first time to resist the inevitable political backlash (Doidge 2015a). A similar response occurred after the death of a policeman Filippo Raciti in February 2007 after clashes between Catania and Palermo fans, as well as when a policeman shot and killed Gabriele Sandri in November of the same year. Within this special issue, it is clear that many countries have their own 'Hillsborough moment' that leads to significant media attention and legislation. These include the near death of the policeman Daniel Nivel after clashes the French police and German hooligans in Lens in 1998, two deaths of fans in France in 2009-10 season, as well as a series of terror attacks in France and Germany between 2015 and 2016. Significant events in the wider political context also impacts how fans respond to transnational competitions. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of Communism dramatically impacted the societies of Poland and Germany, which affected fan responses.

Transnational football tournaments operate outside of the usual football calendar, both temporary and geographically. They take place every two years (the cycle of the European Championships and World Cup) and in a different location each time. Consequently, fans have the opportunity to take part in a different form of football consumption. These temporary and distinct aspects help create the tournament as a liminal space. Giulianotti (1991; 1995) suggests these spaces are carnivals where conventional norms and practices are temporarily suspended. Carnivals are rituals that both unite and divide participants (Doidge 2015b). Rituals are a way of creating a focus and location that helps (re)create group identity (Durkheim 1915; Turner 1969). As Giulianotti observed with Scotland fans, this group identity is in opposition to a symbolic other. But they also help unite the participants within the shared ritual. As highlighted in the articles by Marivoet, Rosa and Silvério, Louis, and Gerke on Portugal, France and the US respectively, a sense of national identity and patriotism can be forged in these moments, both through hosting and victory.

Uncritically seeing the World Cup and European Championships as temporary liminal spaces fails to account for changes to legislation. Bakhtin (1984) suggests that the temporary inversion of established norms creates a moment of the carnivalesque. Participants are permitted to act and dress in ways that differ from their everyday lives. The heavy drinking, kilts and Tam o'Shanter hats sported by Scotland's 'Tartan Army' contrasts with their usual clothes. As Bakhtin (1984, p.7) states:

“Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom”.

The fans become part of the spectacle. Russia 2018 saw the temporary inversion of established norms where people congregated in the streets to celebrate Russia’s victories. Meanwhile at Iran matches, female fans were entering the stadium, an act that is prohibited in Iran. A close reading of Bakhtin suggests that through the subversion, pre-existing norms and hierarchies become entrenched. After the tournament, the status quo returns.

Whilst certain norms and behaviours return to their pre-tournament condition, social actors do interact and forge a collective identity. New experiences and interactions take place and those participants are united in what Bakhtin (1984) calls a folk consciousness, and Turner (1969) labels *communitas*. Potentially, these new relationships can develop new forms of mobilisation around football.

More significantly, there is one area that does not return to its pre-tournament position: legislation. As outlined earlier, security has become a major focus of governments and tournament organisers this century. Much of this focus is on terrorism. Yet we’ve also seen how hooliganism has also been a security focus. Consequently, when new legislation is passed for an international football tournament, it is unlikely that those laws are only enacted for the duration of the event. In reality, security measures will remain after the event, as has occurred in Germany (Claus and Gabler), Portugal (Marivoet, Rosa and Silvério), Poland (Kossakowski) and perhaps more worryingly in France, as Divišová highlights in her examination of the hasty introduction of new anti-terror and anti-hooliganism legislation in preparation for Euro 2016.

Similarly, the focus of commercialisation at these international tournaments can impact how the Football Associations and leagues see their own competitions. Claus and Gabler’s article highlight how the build up to Germany 2006 was a long process which was explicitly tied to a process of commercialisation and gentrification of German football. The DFB and Bundesliga sought to use the tournament to introduce new ways of running football. By developing stadiums, introducing new security measures, and commercial activities for the World Cup, but knowing they will change how football clubs operate. Consequently, the changes implemented for commercial benefits or security are likely to have long lasting legacies of football tournaments and will have dramatic impacts on fans of football clubs within that nation.

Stadium (re)development is a major feature of hosting a football tournament. This can have a dramatic impact on fans, their organisation and how their matchday experience. Bale (1993) suggests that stadium contribute to a feeling of *topophilia* for fans that see it as a sacred space. As observed in the 1990s in the UK, many football clubs began redevelopment without involving supporters. Without this dialogue, existing relationships and rituals can be dramatically shifted and challenged and fans’ experiences seriously impacted. Before Germany 2006, redevelopments led to conflicts as fans were moved from one area to another. For the ultras in particular, this constituted a significant challenge to assert control

over the space. Irving's analysis of the stadium moves of Manchester City (after the 2002 Commonwealth Games) and West Ham United (after London 2012) highlights the significant challenge that fans have to reconcile their desire to enjoy football with their friends and family, whilst wanting success on the pitch and the commercial changes that this requires.

The belated recognition that fans are impacted has seen some potentially positive legacies from international tournaments. UEFA require football clubs to have Supporters Liaison Officers who act as an intermediary between the football club and fans. In Portugal this grew out of the Supporter Ombudsman that was introduced for the 2004 European Championships (see the article by Marivoet, Rosa and Silvério). After the 2012 Euros hosted in Poland, there was a significant project to develop fan culture in co-operation with the football clubs. Rather than just implementing anti-hooliganism legislation (which has had a dramatic effect on fans in the stadium), the PZPN also established a project called 'Supporters United' to try to create a form of civil society around football. The post-socialist space in Poland ensured a relative absence of civil engagement, and the tournament was an opportunity to engage fans in community work. Fans were able to show a level of reflexivity and awareness to challenge the popular image of football and present themselves in a positive light. But this requires hard work, the formation of new partnerships and relationships and significant support from local authorities and football clubs.

As outlined above, there are certain key themes between the articles. Yet they each look at a variety of case studies with a range of foci and arguments. Marivoet, Rosa and Silvério contrast the experience of Portugal hosting the European Championships in 2004 with the national team's victory in 2016. Through this journey they observe how patriotism became more prominent as the national flag was displayed more prominently. At the same time, the ultras style of fandom began to influence the supporters of the national team. They also highlight how measures introduced for Portugal 2004 have remained after the tournament for club fans, notably security measures and the introduction of Supporters Liaison Officers. Engagement with fans was also a major legacy of Poland co-hosting the 2012 Euros. The creation of fan groups called 'Supporters United' has attempted to build civil society in Poland and encourage civic engagement allowing fans to present themselves positively.

Commercialisation is a major theme in Football Studies. Claus and Gabler highlight how the German Football Association implemented a three-pronged strategy to introduce commercialism into German football and attempt to gentrify the sport. Through the development of stadiums, new security measures and new commercial regulations, they sought to mimic what was occurring in the Premier League. This development in England has focussed on stadium redevelopment. Irving's article assesses the impact on fans of West Ham United and Manchester City moving into stadiums build for athletics tournaments.

Security and anti-hooliganism measures are the focus of two articles in this special issue analysing France. Louis charts the growth of hooliganism in France as it developed from clashes between England and France fans in the 1984 European Championships, through the 1998 World Cup to the 2016 Euros. The last tournament has seen the introduction of significant legislation that has been quickly passed through parliament without adequate scrutiny. Divišová's article convincingly argues that terrorism and hooligans are being

conflated under the legislation that can lead to a significant curtailment of supporters' rights in France.

The one article that focuses on a non-European fanbase also highlights how the global approach of FIFA can develop fan culture. Gerke's article on the impact of the 1994 World Cup in the USA shows how it stimulated interest in the sport. Although Major League Soccer was launched in 1996, many of the fans of the USA team preferred supporting the national team; patriotism was a major driver. Yet the national supporters association (American Outlaws) had local chapters who organised fan activities locally. These were often associated with MLS teams and an active fanbase was developed. Now fandom in the US reflects similar patterns in Europe where there are fans who prefer the national team and/or their local teams. Overall, active fan culture is dynamic and shifts according to local, national and international influences which reiterate the importance of research on football fans globally.

## **Conclusion**

Football has undergone a significant political economic transformation over the last three decades. Commercial developments combined with legislation to control certain forms of fan behaviour have impacted fans across Europe. Much of the academic attention on these processes has invariably focussed on individual clubs or national leagues. Yet international tournaments are also drivers for some of these changes. The global attention they attract is one way for those nations to showcase themselves on the world stage. Yet this could also attract negative attention through poor infrastructure, terrorism or hooliganism. Changes introduced for World Cups, European Championships, and to a lesser extent, Commonwealth Games and Olympics, can all impact on fan culture both nationally and locally.

This special issue is the first time the impact of International tournaments on local fans has been considered. Some authors summarize the development in certain countries, others focus rather on generating further reaching questions on this topic, some do both. What is clear is that although there are some local and national differences, there are some broad themes that affect football fans everywhere. Although these events are temporary, they can leave lasting legacies for fans. Stadiums are built or redeveloped leading to fans having to move and shift their habits. Legislation is introduced to tackle hooliganism and introduce commercialism so that FIFA and UEFA can comply with their sponsorship obligations. Yet potentially new relationships can emerge as Supporters Liaison Officers become institutionalised and projects like 'Supporters United' in Poland can develop partnerships between fans, clubs and local authorities. Despite these events being temporary, liminal spaces, there are lasting legacies for fans. What this special issue highlights is that international fans need to be aware of these changes and mobilise accordingly. Working in local or national isolation will have little impact on transnational co-operation between football's governing bodies, media, and national governments.

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