



FOOTBALL RESEARCH IN AN ENLARGED EUROPE

SERIES EDITORS:

ALBRECHT SONNTAG · DAVID RANC

Football Fandom in Europe and Latin America

Culture, Politics, and Violence
in the 21st Century

Edited by

Bernardo Buarque de Hollanda · Thomas Busset

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Football Research in an Enlarged Europe

Series Editors

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This series publishes monographs and edited collections in collaboration with a major EU-funded FP7 research project 'FREE': Football Research in an Enlarged Europe. The series aims to establish Football Studies as a worthwhile, intellectual and pedagogical activity of academic significance and will act as a home for the burgeoning area of contemporary Football scholarship. The themes covered by the series in relation to football include, European identity, memory, women, governance, history, the media, sports mega-events, business and management, culture, spectatorship and space and place. The series is highly interdisciplinary and transnational and the first of its kind to map state-of-the-art academic research on one of the world's largest, most supported and most debated socio-cultural phenomena.

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Preface

The present book is the fruit of a meeting between two researchers, one working in Brazil, the other in Switzerland. Both had worked on extreme fandom in their respective countries and in the context of comparative steps taken on the international scale. We came to the inescapable realization that our interests concerned the same set of problems and that our objectives were similar in many regards, and that each one's knowledge of the other's area of observation and research was weak and fragmentary, this inadequacy being particularly great as regards the European's view of Latin America. From this conclusion sprang the idea of creating a joint work combining contributions from both our continents.

The project was immediately met with a positive echo, but the process of finding authors and convincing a publisher turned out to be long. And the pandemic began to rage while most of the articles were complete or on the way to being so. Due in particular to the disruptions suffered by the academic world, the works were thus considerably hampered and delayed. The more time passed, the more the additional question was raised of knowing whether the supporters could one day find their way back to the stands, and if so, under what conditions. In the autumn of 2021, the entrances to the stadiums at first became ajar, then their doors opened slightly, before some of them began to open up completely.

The normal rhythm is not (yet) re-established, far from it, but the observations made tend to show that the supporters are present and that

they appear under different forms. The calls for a boycott launched here and there in protest against the restrictions linked to the struggle against the spread of infections provide a conspicuous proof that passions have not been extinguished. The future, and studies which will not fail to proliferate, will tell whether the lull in activity imposed by the health measures has transformed the supporters' world. If so, that assessment will be made in the light of the practices described and analysed in this book. We hope you find it a good read.

Sao Paulo, Brazil
Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Bernardo Buarque de Hollanda
Thomas Buset

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1

Football Fans in Europe and Latin America

Bernardo Buarque de Hollanda and Thomas Busset

Today, studies on extreme football fandom have become innumerable, to such a point that it is difficult to have an overall view. This abundant scientific production took off during the 1970s in the United Kingdom and gradually spread to other countries. However, the great majority of the works remain confined to a local, regional or national context. Within this subject of research, interest was at first focused on the question of violence, and then expanded, in Europe at least, to those of racism and right-wing extremism. Since the 1990s, and especially since the turn of the century, approaches have diversified, inquiring, on the one hand, into the effects of globalisation and the commercialisation of football, and, on the other hand, into the responses of supporters in the face of repressive and preventive measures concerning them.

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More and more attention is thus devoted to the way in which supporters position themselves as football actors and defend their interests vis-à-vis clubs and federations, as well as the media and public bodies. The ever-greater media attention given to football, and, in particular, the planet-wide broadcasting of matches contested during large international competitions, or within the framework of national championships, has led to a deterritorialisation of supporter group membership and to the emergence of new forms of identification with a club.

This project combines pieces of work on Europe and Latin America, the two continents where football arouses the most ardent passions among its spectators. Curiously, an undertaking to compare on a large scale the forms extreme fandom takes in these two geographical areas is still lacking. A situational analysis of the scientific literature devoted to the subject over the last two or three decades represents a step in this direction, making a scattered store of knowledge accessible. It thus answers a need to clarify regional differences in identities and in the practices of supporters (Kelly 2015: 320). Beyond that, it is also a matter of stimulating reflection on the nature of extreme fandom, with the underlying question of knowing on what foundation projects of a general scope should be based.

The work contains eight contributions on Europe and five on Latin America. To be able to best cover these two parts of the world, it was therefore necessary to group countries together. For the sake of consistency, the authors were invited to raise, as far as possible, the history of extreme fandom in the area under consideration, its structure, its ways of operating and the identities of supporters' groups, the management of extreme fandom, and finally the relationships that supporters maintain with the political sphere. The introduction presents an overview of the production of scientific literature on the subject of supporters on the two continents before presenting several elements of comparison. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, we subsequently take a retrospective look at the events which led to the interruption of sporting competitions, and their repercussions on the latter. The final chapter of the book proposes an overview of the different contributions.

Latin America

Over the last quarter of the twentieth century, in the dawn of national championships and the Copa Libertadores de América, certain groupings of football fans have become important in Latin America (Bowman 2015), being responsible for forming a Latin American youth subculture associated with professional South American football clubs (Frydenberg and Sazbon 2015). Among these groups, some had continental projection and influenced the formation of supporters' groups in Central America, as well as inspiring supporters' associations in Europe or even in other parts of the globe.

In this context, supporters' groups of the main Argentine clubs stand out, such as *La Doce*, of Boca Juniors; *Los Borrachos del Tablón*, of River Plate; and *La Guardia Imperial*, of Racing. In Chile, the *Garra Blanca* has represented Colo-Colo supporters since 1986, when they started a dissident faction within Colo-Colo's *barra Quién es Chile*. The *Garra Blanca* was inspired in the name of a Brazilian supporters' group linked to Corinthians, the *Garra Negra*, which existed in the 1980s. The supporters of *Universidad de Chile* are known for their group *Los de Abajo*, whereas the Universidad Católica is followed by the group *Los Cruzados*.

The South American model (Morales 2013; Moreira 2005; Zucal 2013) established by the way of singing and supporting of such groups is followed in the various countries of the continent, with local adaptations and variants being more or less prominent. This exhaustive list still includes the Colombian supporters' group *Los del Sur*, of Atlético Nacional, and the Ecuadorian *Sur Oscura*, of Barcelona from Guayaquil. In the case of Mexican supporters' groups, the paradigm shift under the influence of South America's *hinchada* is evident. Previously named by the locals as *porras*—with a more familiar character and closer to the club administration—the supporters' groups have been calling themselves *barras* since the 1990s. Among the examples are *La Rebel*, affiliated to the Pumas team, located in the Federal District, *La Banda del Rojo*, linked to the club Toluca, and the *Sangre Azul*, linked to the team Cruz Azul, also located in Mexico's capital city.

Although the information in contemporary and comparative Latin America (Furtado 2007; Gruzinski 2003; Laclau 2013; Morse 1988; Skidmore and Smith 2005; Todorov 1993) is facilitated today by the speed of information and the intensification of modern media, we can assume that we still know relatively little about the reality of football in the region.

The Argentine researcher Pablo Alabarces, of the University of Buenos Aires, is one of the exceptions in this regard. Formed by the teachings of anthropologist Eduardo Archetti (2003)—author of the masterpiece *Masculinities: football, polo and the tango in Argentina*—who understands sports as a complex game of mirrors and masks of collective identities, Alabarces is one of the investigators who contributes to systematising what is relevant in academic production. He surpasses social essayism and contributes to consolidating the subarea of scientific knowledge. Alabarces' contribution also bore fruit in the formation of a generation of researchers in his country.

Among other themes, they focused on the understanding of the complex reality of Argentine supporters' groups, with their controversial and ill-reputed *barras*. In a country with a history of more than 270 football fan deaths since the 1920s, according to journalist Amílcar Romero, the studies have focused on identifying anthropological aspects, namely, the internal power structures, the territorial dynamics of this "City of supporters' groups", the ritual on the days of the matches and the militancy triggered by the group members, with the mapping of a kind of anthropology of the "fan group morals" such as the feelings of honour, sacrifice, loyalty, manhood and shame present in such a universe. The polysemic word *aguante*—an emic category in Argentina, as the anthropologists point out—means body resistance, that is, the physical exacerbation of a set of practices and representations by the team, associated with supporting it by singing and fighting with opponents outside the stadium. The "violent" body of the supporter seeks his male legitimacy against the "other" and is built sometimes with hostility, or xenophobia, or sexism.

The effort of Argentine researchers inspired by Alabarces intended to answer the question: how is it possible to understand aggressive behaviour in football without incurring normative judgments formulated by public opinion and echoed by common sense? This question is the

starting point for the 2005 collection *Hinchadas*, a collective work with qualified texts on a wide range of dimensions of cheering, such as the representation of *hincha* in the print media throughout the twentieth century, the symbology and the objects disputed by the different supporters—shirts and flags caught from opponents are seen as trophies—as well as the codes of honour and manhood cultivated within the groups.

The work done in Argentina (Aragòn 2007) is similar to the notable collective study conducted in Mexico over the past 10 years by a group of anthropologists. They constituted a network and a research agenda materialised in the excellent collection *Afición futbolística y rivalidades en él México contemporáneo: una mirada nacional*, organised by Roger Magazine, Samuel López and Sérgio Varela. Ethnographic studies focus on football affiliation and consider the comparative scale of clubs, cities and regions in their dynamic alliances and rivalries, oppositions and compositions that the organisers call “national urban system”.

Inspired by the work of Argentine and Mexican colleagues, this work seeks to be a wider contribution to the subject, bringing together researchers from various Latin American regions (Panfichi 2008) who investigate this sub-theme of the sports studies field, from a transnational perspective: the supporters’ groups, nucleated around their clubs and around the professional football from a set of vicinal countries. The collection of texts seeks to bring together researchers who have similar research interests in their regions of origin but had little communication with each other so far. The Academy, especially in the field of social sciences, faces the thematic of violence in supporters’ groups, considering it is a topic already ruled and biased by the eyes of the media.

News from the mass media often echoes incidents of vandalism, urban disorder and, more recently, of crimes associated with intergroup feuds. An emblematic example occurred in Argentina; a fact that is somewhat understandable due to the public notoriety of the supporters’ groups of the main football clubs. This is the case of journalist Gustavo Grabia’s work (2012), entitled *La Doce: a explosiva história da torcida organizada mais temida do mundo* (*La Doce: the explosive story of the world’s most feared supporters’ group*). The repercussion of the book was welcomed outside its national borders.

Although the journalist's inspiration is a foreign study, a book by Bill Bufford (2010), or that by Franklin Foer (2009), it should not be forgotten that Gustavo Grabia's approach echoed an intellectual thinking already grounded in the Argentine soil. His backing was in the work of Juan José Sebreli, who in 1998 systematised his critical theories on football, especially against the *hincha*, in the book *La era del fútbol*.

In at least three of the thirteen chapters of his work, Sebreli unravels the figure of the fanatic and, in the Frankfurtian style, equates the temperament of the *hincha* with the typical traits of the authoritarian personality. In substantive terms, nothing is quite distinct from Le Bon's old propositions on the passive, irrational, suggestible individual, who acts in a rush when he finds himself in the crowd. The *barras bravas*, to a greater or lesser extent, attack and kill their opponents, threaten and extort the club officers, and intimidate and pressure the team players.

On the one hand, academia reacts to this kind of condemnation of public opinion by denying or seeking to relativise the sensationalism of the media. On the other hand, these media seek out academic experts when dramatic cases occur such as beating deaths or firearm use. These events cause perplexities and stir up the sport's backstage. The theme enters the police pages, and the situation generates an alarmist attitude of the press. The media, in their turn, clamour for sudden solutions and demand strong solutions from government authorities.

Due to a series of incidents accumulated in recent years, we face a double challenge:

1. Recognising the gravity of the phenomenon and academically qualifying the debate, without falling into certain pitfalls and Manichaeisms placed by the mainstream press agenda, to avoid hasty and generalist judgments; such recognition is on the agenda of Latin American researchers, like the Mexican sociologist Fernando Segura Trejo (2013).
2. Knowing the importance of academic participation in a public debate involving sports journalists, supporters (group members or not), police officers (civil and military), club officers and state officials, with the broader aim of developing joint public policies capable of arbitrating conflicts and proposing alternatives beyond the usual criminal-repressive attitude.

Moreover, Sebrelí also emphasises the importance of the radically political—or micropolitical, in the Foucaultian sense—dimension of the supporters' associativism and of the rationalised uses of the passion for football teams in Latin America. The rational-passionate combination tends to be little emphasised, since the social imagery has the habit of placing football fan violence on the unilateral key of mass irrationality, a rather crude and reductionist characterisation that does not cope with the complexity of the ethos that animates people in supporters' groups.

The interested and estimated dynamics of cohesion and conflict, of unity and fragmentation, that pervade the trajectory of these associations in a constant generational and spatial tension, exists in the same way as certain social movements such as trade unions, student unions, neighbourhood associations and political parties.

We emphasise three factors from which the intensification of these internal disputes derives and which go unnoticed to the naked eye:

1. The growth and territorial enlargement of the supporters' groups in the Latin American countries, as Roger Magazine (2008, 2012) has rightly demonstrated in Mexico, and the relationship with the wider urban problem, in which local geographical belonging and national club belonging are juxtaposed.
2. The increase in the visibility and status of the same associative entities, though in the negative form of news of fights and clashes, which generates the demand for personal prestige and the enjoyment of the benefits of those who lead these associations.
3. The economic returns that the management of a supporters' group can provide to their leaders, since they follow, with some variations, the mercantile financial logic and the remarkable capitalist ethos of contemporary football.

Given the context exposed above, it is understood that a book with both regional intercontinental scopes, as well as a comparative perspective, will be of great use, whether for the academic broadening of its analyses by bringing together researchers from different continents, or for the field of public policies, capable of developing preventive measures,

based on a more qualified understanding of the youth phenomenon of contemporary supporters' groups.

Europe

The studies on fandom in Europe have long been marked by the distinction made between two historical models, hooliganism “English style” and the *ultras* movement which has its origins in Italy (cf. Mignon 1998). These references and, in particular, the description of the *modus operandi* of those who subscribe to one or the other of these models had become a kind of prerequisite for local or regional monographs. Moreover, comparative works on the clubs of different countries frequently include at least one English or Italian club (Ranc 2012; Numerato 2018). Today, on the continent, the *ultras* movement represents “the most dominant form of fandom in Germany, Poland, Greece, Southern France and the Balkans”, and “elements of the *ultras* style have been adopted in Eastern and Central Europe, Spain [and] Turkey” (Doidge et al. 2020: 4), and one could be tempted to reduce the history of European extreme fandom to that of the spread of its “Italian” variant, the United Kingdom constituting a special case.

Yet, we know that during such cultural transfers, the conditions of implantation differ and imported practices are combined with others: local, regional or national (Giulianotti 1999a: 39). Furthermore, practices evolve according to the cohorts and succeeding generations but also, and most importantly, to the political, social and economic context (Pilz et al. 2006; Testa 2009). Thus, recent scientific literature is distinguished by a diversity of themes: while the question of violence (Armstrong 1998; Frosdick and Marsh 2005), political extremism and racism (Back et al. 2001; Busset et al. 2008; Gabler 2009) were at the centre of many projects, attention has gradually shifted to globalisation, localism and transnationalism (Giulianotti and Robertson 2007; King 2003; Millward 2011), militancy and activism (Basson and Lestrelin 2014; Cleland 2010, 2015; Garcia and Zheng 2017; Numerato 2018; Turner 2021; Williams 2013).

In the United Kingdom and on the continent, some authors have raised the question of knowing whether the fans constituted a social movement (Hourcade 2014; Millward 2011; Millward and Poulton 2014; Testa 2009). One of the consequences of this widening perspective is that many researchers no longer use the term “hooliganism” to refer to militant fandom in general, preferring to reserve the word for the English style in which violent confrontation played a major role. This abandonment of the word is also explained by the fact that, in common usage, the hooligan is put in the same category as a thug or a delinquent who engages in acts of violence during sporting competitions, and the fact that, in public debates, with which scientific researchers have often been associated (Alabarces and Moreira 2017: 465–466), it was practically no longer possible to set out the various expressions and facets of extreme fandom. In addition, this choice of terminology can be interpreted as a concession to the protagonists of the *ultras* movement who, in these debates, have always made an effort to minimise the importance of violence among them.

In the United Kingdom, where football was transformed earlier and more extensively than elsewhere in the world over the last two or three decades, the organisation of supporters’ responses in the face of this change stimulated innumerable works which analysed the internal and external ramifications of this trend. For an overview of this literature, we refer you to the contribution of Cleland and Giulianotti in the present volume. Here, we will be content with bringing up two points which have been raised echoing these studies, as they indicate the directions of research that so far have been little explored.

In fact, two criticisms have emerged: one regretting that the works done still neglected the new categories of supporters which appeared in the wake of the structural changes in football, in particular concerning women and families (Millward 2011: 74), the other lamenting the fact that these same works broadly ignored the way in which the sport was lived and consumed in everyday life, away from the stadiums, and that they especially neglected fans who do not regularly attend live matches (Crawford 2004: 33; see likewise Stone 2007). To remedy this, Garry Crawford, in his study of a Manchester ice hockey team (2003 and 2004), suggested referring to the concept of career, which takes into account the fact that human action is viewed as a process and makes it possible to link

the objective and subjective dimensions of social phenomena (Crawford 2003: 225–226; 2004: 41; Lestrelin 2012: 495).

On the continent, the fear that football might follow the same trend as in England is spreading as stadiums are modernising and national legislation to keep the situation under control is becoming harsher and more uniform (Tsoukala 2009), often in the run-up to a football tournament (World Cup or European Championships). This economic and political context favours the extension of the *ultras* movement from Italy towards the north and east of Europe (Kennedy 2013: 134), an extension which has been the subject of innumerable local and national monographies since the turn of the century. Like in the United Kingdom, the researchers' interest since then has been focused more and more on the activism and militancy of supporters, that is to say on the defence of common interests (Totten 2015; Numerato 2018).

What is new is that the networks are created and arise spontaneously between groups of “enemy” fans that confronted each other, and still sometimes do, physically and symbolically during the championships. The motives of common struggle are varied. In Italy, for example, the young neo-fascist *ultras* join forces to resist oppression from the state apparatus (Testa 2009). In France, fans seek the assistance of lawyers to defend their cause before courts and to lift stadium bans (Ginhoux 2016); in Switzerland, they consult with legislators with a view to launching a referendum against a law which targets them (Busset 2014); in Germany, they engage in communal actions for the continuation of championship matches on Saturday afternoons, or the retention of standing places at low prices (Gabler 2011: 54; Merkel 2012; Kennedy and Kennedy 2012: 330). To be sure, these struggles are not specific to countries and are used here to illustrate a point. The common denominator is the idea that fans are the (potential) victims of the actions of other football actors (clubs, federations, public bodies, etc.) who seek to silence them or even ban them from stadia. More generally, the rampant commercialisation of football is denounced, with England being the example not to follow in this regard.

It is revealing that recent production in Europe has been characterised by the publication of summary works, one on the *ultras* movement (Doidge et al. 2020), and the other on the activism of supporters

(Numerato 2018). They respond to the need to take stock of the works produced over the last two or three decades on these subjects, but possibly also reveal that the latter have been dealt with exhaustively, to the detriment of other themes such as gender, generations, media attention and deterritorialisation.

However, that is forgetting that there remains a large imbalance in knowledge between the different regions of the continent and that there is consequently a need to catch up. Besides, the mechanisms or phenomena of transferring practices have still been inadequately studied. From this perspective, it is, for example, appropriate to analyse together countries or regions of different sizes, with very different economic weight and whose football championships differ considerably in terms of attendance and resonance. The influence exerted on Switzerland by its neighbours offers a good illustration of this: the *ultras* style became established earlier in the Italian- and French-speaking cantons than in the German-speaking part of the country (Busset 2014).

The linguistic factor, and the resulting access to the media, the interest taken in the championships of neighbouring countries (*Bundesliga*, *Serie A* and *Ligue 1*) explain at least this evolution: the rise of the *ultras* groups in Germany from the end of the 1990s onwards (Schwier 2005; Pilz et al. 2006) spread to German-speaking Switzerland. In the same way, the social and educational work carried out among the fans (*Fanprojekte*) was adopted by several German-speaking Swiss cities, but not in the other linguistic regions. Finally, the experiences gained in connection with the 2006 World Cup had an impact on Switzerland during the organisation of the 2008 European championships, especially as regards systems for managing supporters and the adoption of relevant legislation. These elements led us to propose in this book a common chapter on the three German-speaking countries of the continent.

In the present volume, it was in fact necessary to group countries together in order to best cover the European continent, while still maintaining balance in the project. This breakdown, to some extent arbitrary, was carried out according to geographical position in relation to the areas where the two models or reference styles originated (hooligans and *ultras*), the theory being that their implantation was favoured by spatial proximity (mobility of supporters) and cultural proximity (access to the media

of the major football countries). The lines that follow provide a few criteria which guided the geographical breakdowns.

A chapter specific to the United Kingdom is justified, so necessary taking into account the particular place which that country occupies in the history of extreme fandom in Europe. The country has seen an unparalleled transformation due to the economic boom of the Premier League and its resonance in the world. The media coverage of the English championship and the interest taken in it have led to the establishment of transnational networks of fans on a global scale and to a redefinition of the forms of attachment to clubs (Giulianotti 1999a; Millward 2011; Redhead 2017). Dealing separately with British extreme fandom is also justified due to the number, richness and diversity of studies devoted to it. Moreover, the country has four distinct championships and the rivalries between the nations making up this state reverberate in the manifestations and practices of fans (e.g. Whigham 2014).

The grouping together of Italy and France is relevant since the fans of the Midi region rapidly adopted similar practices to those in the Italian peninsula (Bromberger 1995; Lestrelin 2010). Besides, the spread of the *ultras* style from the shores of the Mediterranean has been extensively studied and constitutes an interesting case of interweaving with the English model, which has been prevalent in the north of France (Mignon 1998; Hourcade 2008). British fans have also played an important role in the transformation of Dutch fandom and the adoption of violent behaviour (Spaaij 2007b: 318), and have also influenced, in turn, groups of fans in Belgium and Germany (Spaaij 2005; Fincoeur 2008: 129–130). The Netherlands and Belgium have also played a pioneering role in the setting up of preventative measures against acts of violence during football matches and major international competitions (Frosdick and Marsh 2005: 178; Spaaij 2007a; Fincoeur 2014). The motives for grouping Germany, Austria and Switzerland together have been set out above.

From the perspective of football, in general, and extreme fandom, in particular, Scandinavia presents a relatively homogenous picture, which sets it apart from continental Europe (Andersson and Carlsson 2009; Andersson and Hognestad 2019; Hognestad 2009). Scandinavia is characterised by the fact that British clubs have had, since the 1970s and the beginning of broadcasts of English championship matches, many fans,

notably in Denmark, Sweden and Norway (Goksøyr and Hognestad 1999), with as many examples of transnational fandom. On the other hand, Northern Europe (Scandinavia, Scotland and Northern Ireland) has a particular kind of festive, colourful and humoristic fandom, whose protagonists are referred to by the expression “carnival fans” (Giulianotti 1999b: 69).

Spain and Portugal are treated together due to their geographical position. Even though the *ultras* movement became established there relatively rapidly, these two countries have their own fandom traditions which distinguish them not only from the rest of Europe (Spaaij and Viñas 2005; Marivoet 2010) but also from each other (see Viñas contribution).

The east-west split remains valid insofar as in countries from the former Eastern Bloc, football controlled by state bodies gave way to a neo-liberal mode of functioning. Their clubs and their directors fundamentally changed. Furthermore, exchanges that fans kept up with their Western counterparts were very restrained until the opening of the frontiers. South-Eastern Europe and ex-Yugoslavian countries should be treated separately in that sport, and football especially, played an important role in the wars that led to the implosion of the country.

There, fandom is characterised by residual and resurgent nationalism, ethnic and religious divides as well as strong homophobic tendencies (Hughson 2017: 943–944; Hughson and Skillen 2013). However, there are also movements from citizens and politicians that seek to counter these excesses. These sometimes resort to violence (Hodges 2016; Hodges and Brentin 2018: 330). On Eastern Europe there are occasional studies, some of which are very recent, for example, on Poland (Pilz et al. 2006: 188–211; Kossakowski 2017a, 2017b, Grodecki and Kossakowski 2021), Romania (Guțu 2016), Russia (Gloriozova 2016) or the Ukraine (Ruzhelnyk 2016), but, to our knowledge, there is no overview.

Uniformity and Diversity in Extreme Fandom

The authors who have carried out comparisons between the two continents have generally made reference to the *ultras*, the dominant form of extreme fandom in Europe (Doidge et al. 2020: 182), and to the Argentinian *barras*, whose *modus operandi* has inspired militant supporters in other countries of the South American continent (de Hollanda 2014: 214). It has emerged that while South American groups resemble their European equivalents in some respects (level of organisation, boisterous chanting, pyrotechnic displays at matches, violent behaviour, etc.), they differ from them particularly due to their long-standing and persistent conflicts with law enforcement, and especially the relationships they maintain with sporting and political leaders (Giulianotti 1999a: 58; Giulianotti and Robertson 2007: 175; Spaaij and Testa 2017: 365–366).

One explanation offered is that Argentinian clubs are organised in associations whose committees are elected by the members (Cleland 2015: 114). To that, we could answer that this structure, *mutatis mutandis*, is to be found in Spain around clubs built around the principle of *socios* (like FC Barcelona or Real Madrid), who as voting shareholders have leverage against (future) directors (Spaaij and Viñas 2005, 2013). Does Spanish extreme fandom thereby resemble that of Argentina? Similarly, in Germany, where since 1998 the statutes of the *Bundesliga* provide that a club can establish itself as a joint stock company as long as it continues to hold the majority of voting rights during a general assembly (rule of 50 + 1), the members can, at the very least, express their opinions at general assemblies and sometimes create a stir, as shown by the heated debates which took place at the end of 2021 at FC Bayern Munich, over a sponsoring contract entered into with *Qatar Airways*.

Still on the level of comparison, it is commonly observed that both the *barras* and the *ultras* make use of violence according to the situation, but that the said violence is not an end in itself. However, this analogy is relativised by the fact that clashes are much more deadly in Argentina—and in Brazil—than in Europe (Segura M. Trejo et al. 2019: 838; Newson 2019: 433). Moreover, the notion of *aguante*, which sometimes refers to the fervour and loyalty of the groups of supporters (*hinchadas*), and

sometimes to the physical altercations during clashes with rivals, on which occasion the supporter shows his valour, his courage and his mastery of combat techniques, does not have an equivalent in Europe.

The phenomenon of the *aguante*, which became predominant in the Argentinian football scene during the 1990s, legitimises aggressive behaviour and makes up an essential component of the identity of the *barras* (Alabarces et al. 2018: 478–479). The *ultras*, for their part, state that they only use violence in response to provocations, offering a good illustration of the paradox of the chicken and the egg. It turns out, from this simplified overview, that the few elements we have at our disposal remain, all in all, superficial. Fruitful comparisons can only be made around collaboration between researchers from the two continents founded on common issues. The approach consisting in referring to “native” categories, which the supporters invoke to define themselves, seems at first glance to yield poor results. At the outset, it runs into problems of definition: what do we mean by *barras* and *ultras*? Doidge, Kossakowski and Mintert (2020: 5–10) demonstrated the heterogeneity of the *ultras*.

This disparity is striking in the area of relations with the political world: while some groups insist on their neutrality—everyone is free as regards political opinions, but they are not to be expressed at the stadium—others are situated on the extreme right and chant racist, xenophobic or nationalist slogans, and yet others place themselves on the extreme left and participate in anti-discrimination campaigns and denounce the excesses of capitalism. The authors cited are correct to call for caution in any generalisation. The other trap consists in giving too much weight to local peculiarities, knowing that imported practices are combined with local, regional or national elements in accordance with the conditions under which they took root (Giulianotti 1999a: 39).

Consequently, the question is raised of knowing to what extent the result of this interweaving is faithful to the original. In the present work, Carles Viña judges it inappropriate to use the term *ultra* to refer to Spanish militant supporters, even though the word features in the names of many groups and the country is often counted among those mentioned to illustrate the Italian influence. Likewise, Onésimo Rodríguez Aguilar considers that it is not relevant to refer to the *barras* and *aguante* categories in relation to Central American extreme fandom, as other