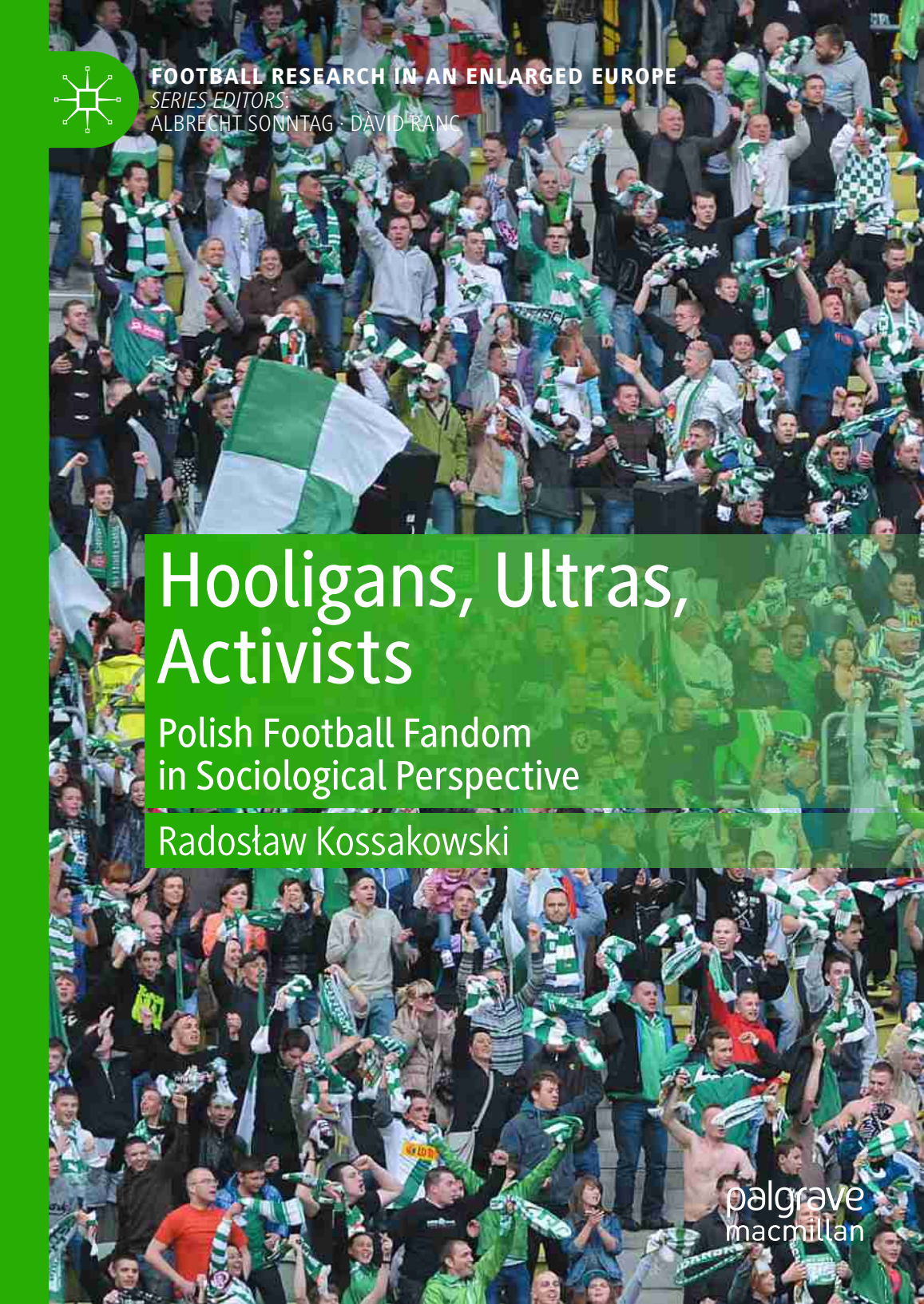

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Hooligans, Ultras, Activists

Polish Football Fandom in Sociological Perspective

Radosław Kossakowski

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Contents

Introduction

Football as a global social phenomenon involves a number of actors, such as sports institutions, the state and local administration, the media, corporate sponsors, NGOs and supporters[1] (Giulianotti and Robertson 2009). It seems that the key objective of the majority of football associations in Europe is to strengthen cooperation with local authorities and supporters' associations operating in the local context. As a result, football associations will have a greater impact on the development of local football centres, and—on the other hand—the local administration and supporters will receive assistance in further development, giving them a sense that they are not left alone. Research findings indicate that fans involved in various initiatives are less prone to acts of violence (Pilz et al. 2006). Furthermore, the 'social identity' approach (Stott and Reicher 1998) demonstrates that fan aggression often stems from aggressive and provocative attitudes towards them. Providing football fans with opportunities for positive interaction and

[1] The present study uses two English terms referring to people interested in/devoted to football (club, etc.): 'fan' and a 'supporter'. In Polish, there is only one equivalent, which denotes both of these: *kibic*. Another Polish word, *kibol*, is used with reference to 'hardcore' fans (also known as *pseudokibice* and *chuligani*, 'pseudo-fans' and 'hooligans'). This explanation is important as in English studies 'fan' and 'supporter' are used in different contexts (see Giulianotti's taxonomy 2002). In this book, the words 'fan' and 'supporter' are used interchangeably when referring to *kibic*.

cooperation in the creation of good practice can significantly reduce their tendency towards vandalism and hooliganism.

A large number of articles devoted to the study of football fans, particularly in Britain (King 1997), have focused on the phenomenon of 'football hooliganism'. Interpretations of the sources of this social phenomenon include, for example, works published by representatives of the Leicester School (Dunning et al. 1988), whose figurational approach associating football hooliganism with certain segments of the working class has aroused considerable criticism (Giulianotti 1994). Apart from studies using other theoretical models (Taylor 1971; Marsh et al. 1978), research in this field includes the application of ethnographic methods (Armstrong 1998; Pearson 2012). Football hooliganism has also been the subject of comparative studies discussing the phenomenon in relation to different countries (Spaaij 2006; Tsoukala 2009).

However, it must be remembered that hooliganism is only one aspect of fandom. Although acts of vandalism can still be encountered in the stadiums, they have certainly been marginalized as a result of changes in modern football. As demonstrated in a number of studies going beyond the hooligan dimension, the culture of football supporters is more nuanced and should be approached in a number of different contexts, such as the presence of female fans (Pope 2017; Toffoletti 2017; Antonowicz et al. 2020), identity issues (Giulianotti 2002), commercialization (Kennedy and Kennedy 2016), securitization (Giulianotti 2011), socialization (Dixon 2012) and global networks (Millward 2011). Other aspects which have come under academic scrutiny include social and political involvement of fans and their multidimensional activism (Doidge 2015; Cleland et al. 2018), with their behaviour analysed in the context of reflexive modernization (Numerato 2015), or local politics (Hodges 2019). In recent years, there have been many papers and books published, dedicated to local, European fan environments. Except English football fandom case which is well evaluated and described, it is possible to gain knowledge, for example, on Italian ultras scene (Doidge 2015), German fandom (Gabler 2010), sophisticated and complicated Balkan ethnic and national mosaic (Hodges 2019), Danish (Pfister et al. 2013), Spanish (Llopis-Goig 2015), Czech (Numerato 2018), Romanian (Guțu 2017), Turkish (Nuhrat 2018) and many more. These works clearly

demonstrate that every regional and national case is different, and that the hooligans' 'optics' is definitely too limited to describe the richness of fandom cultures across Europe. Polish fandom culture—analysed in this book—is also a multidimensional phenomenon and certainly cannot be limited to hooliganism or characterized by simplistic dichotomies, such as the one between traditional and consumer ('new') fans (Antonowicz et al. 2015).

Fan culture in Poland has been based on grass-roots, spontaneous movement excluding any cooperation with local authorities and sports organizations over long periods. The activity of supporters' groups has regularly failed to follow the principles of the official bodies by breaching the moral and legal standards. However, as history shows, the tone of fandom culture has to be investigated in a multidimensional way. In the 1990s unprecedented violence dominated in Polish stadiums, but in the twenty-first century, the hooligan dimension has slowly started to be complemented by other forms of activity (hooliganism has taken on a more 'professional' form, practised by well-trained 'fighters', with the focus on arranged fights outside the stadia): ultras groups flourished in many small and big cities (performative dimension), supporters' associations have been established (institutional dimension), fans have started to engage intensively in social and charity actions (activism dimension), and strong tendencies to establish group as well as ideological identity have appeared (ideological and group dimension). To these aspects one should add some fundamental value for all supporters—their passion for football and feelings for the beloved club constitute an important part of fan identity (the identity dimension). In recent years, with institutional support (Polish Football Association and Ministry of Sport and Tourism), a portion of fans can take responsibility for creating a positive image of fandom, building social capital around the clubs, and gaining the trust of local communities within the framework of the 'Supporter United' programme (*Kibice Razem* in Polish). In other words, institutions provide the material and organizational support, and the fans are social capital networks focused around the clubs. In terms of historical development these should be considered unprecedented achievements. All these dimensions, reinforced by a system of strong values and structural cohesion, make fan culture fascinating from a research point of view.

The social image of football fans in Poland is generally quite negative. To a certain extent such opinions are justified (owing to fans' failure to comply with the legal regulations, the use of pyrotechnics, abusive chants, etc.; Polish clubs have been fined for such incidents). It is essential that Polish clubs, the Polish Football Association, Polish public opinion, European organizations and UEFA authorities evaluate positive activity leading to the 'civilizing' of football culture, revising the image of football and attracting new supporters from other social circles. On the other hand, positive changes in fandom culture cannot camouflage the many existing pathologies: violence, involvement in criminal activities (in the hooligan domain), offensive language, and barriers against inclusiveness. Polish fans employ their social and cultural capital both for laudable reasons and—in some cases—illegal or 'immoral' ones. It is therefore not feasible to measure such a multidimensional sphere using one criterion.

The main aim of this study is to present a multifaceted world of Polish football fans. This book is the result of many years of research and study, consisting of content analysis of fan magazines and websites, several interviews (both individual and focus interviews) and fieldwork in many locations and circumstances—wherever fans were active and it was possible to engage with them. Thus, this book is a specific ethnographic case study portraying—in a multi-threaded way—a social-cultural world which has not yet been presented in such a complex way. It is important to underline, however, that not all categories of fans have been investigated. In Poland, there is an important difference between fans of league clubs and supporters of the national team. The latter are engaged in a different way in their passion for the sport. They support the national team, which is naturally not as demanding as supporting a local club. Supporting the national team is not connected in the Polish case—although it sounds paradoxical—to a strong ideological and identity sphere. It is true that people attending matches of national teams are patriots, and very often wear white and red clothes, hats and scarves, but they are not the 'die-hard' category of fans. They usually 'do not have a problem' with rivals, and can chat and drink a beer with fans from other countries (this was clearly demonstrated by Euro 2012 co-hosted by Poland). In the case of club fans, the situation is different: mostly, they express a highly antagonistic attitude towards rivals from other clubs.

Generally speaking, this book is devoted only to supporters of Polish football clubs. Many examples described in the following chapters concern both fans from the ultras stands and people sitting in 'normal' tribunes. However, all of them feel, to varying degrees, a sense of identification with their clubs.

The study has a regional/national character, but it could be interesting for anyone involved in research on football and fandom culture. To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first attempt to introduce this subject in book form. So far, the topic of Polish fandom has been investigated in articles available only in English and only concerning selected aspects (see: Kossakowski 2017a, b, c; 2019; Kossakowski et al. 2018; Kossakowski and Besta 2018; Antonowicz and Grodecki 2018). Some themes investigated in this book have been undertaken in the author's previous papers but here they are presented in a deeper, more developed way.

The study is organized as follows. The last paragraphs of this introduction are dedicated to methodological issues. The book is not based on one leading theoretical approach—various interpretations are implemented. The chapters are devoted to the different dimensions of Polish fandom. Chapter 1 offers a discussion of the historical roots of Polish fandom. The conceptual framework of Norbert Elias's figurational sociology helps to grasp the particularity of the subject under consideration. In this perspective, the history of Polish fandom is approached as a social process characterized by 'functional differentiation' in the structure of fandom. The chapter provides the background for the other parts of the study and presents an evaluation of the various dimensions of fandom, such as ultras culture, hooligan (and criminal) activity, social and charity activities, individual as well as group identity, and the principles and structures existing in the fan environment. These are evaluated separately. Following this historical chapter, the structural issues are approached: the hierarchical order prevailing in fan groups, the role of cohesion, trust, and the system of informal rules. This chapter demonstrates some basic structural conditions that are foundations for all spheres investigated in the next chapters. It concerns not only relations between fans in local groups but also the complicated system of 'friendships' and 'enemies' within the groups themselves.

The third chapter describes a closely knit sphere of hooligans. It shows that the contemporary hooliganism in Poland has evolved from spontaneous brawls to 'professional' groups consisting of specialized and well-trained fans. Due to legal restrictions and police surveillance, hooligans are active outside the stadiums, battling mostly in arranged fights. Some of them are incorporated into criminal activities. Due to the specificity of this dimension, the chapter includes quotations from anonymous respondents. Chapter 4 considers some external factors influencing both the behaviours and identity of fans. In the 2010s, Polish authorities implemented restrictive laws which greatly transformed fan culture. This was related to the organization of Euro 2012 and the pursuit of 'modernization' of the whole country. In response, fans established a 'resistance identity', and this has had a substantial effect on the search for social and political identity. As a result, the fan environment turned 'right' in terms of ideological engagement.

Individual trajectories, emotions and attitudes are investigated in Chap. 5. It includes an analysis of the socialization process, with the fundamental meaning of the club as a symbolic universe. In many ways, fans manifest their sense of identification and belonging through the club. This part is also dedicated to female fans. Their role is still marginalized and they are not perceived seriously by many male counterparts, but this does not mean that women are less engaged in the role of fan. The following chapter presents the development and structure of the performative dimension: ultras. Polish ultras are well-known due to their choreographies that constitute the ways of communication. Polish ultras demonstrate various ideas thanks to powerful and sometimes controversial aesthetic form. The last chapter is dedicated to bring more information on the institutional and activism dimension. The development of supporters' associations is analysed, as well as various kinds of actions undertaken by fans. In this part of the book, the 'Supporters United' programme is evaluated as well—an unprecedented phenomenon in the fandom evolution. The following chapters are devoted to the analysis of empirical data and identify the main categories both in the world of fans and in the institutional and social spheres. Together, the chapters create a cohesive image of Polish fandom but they can also be read separately.

Research on Football Fandom: Methodological Challenges

In the fan research, the final conclusions depend, to a large extent, on the research questions as well as the research methods used. While analysing the content of fanzines, websites, and so on is not complicated as it does not require, for example, significant emotional investment, the situation looks different in the case of ethnographic fieldwork. Researchers who have decided on the strategy of 'entering' the fan environment need to face many often very difficult challenges, demanding not only knowledge but also physical strength, resistance to stress, and the ability to confront different cultural and social phenomena and extreme emotions (such as fear or anxiety). Studies presented by Richard Giulianotti (1995) and Gary Armstrong (1998) show how many 'tests' a researcher has to go through to be accepted in the research area. The situation becomes even more complicated when the question of gender is involved. Emma Poulton (2014) and Ilaria Pitti (2019) show the 'traps' that await women who decide to study a highly masculine fan community. On the other hand, Geoff Pearson (2012) in his ethnography of English fans points to the importance of a strong and healthy body, in connection with the need to experience such elements of fandom culture as alcohol, long trips and the often carnival-like nature of fandom.

The research on Polish fans, particularly the most 'hardcore' ones, yields many similar challenges. Standing on ultras terraces and travelling on away matches do not pose particularly difficult problems, as long as some norms are met. To accommodate these norms, the researcher has to familiarize himself/herself with all rules and regulations in advance. These are available in wide circulation on the websites of supporters' groups and associations, and are also shared by experienced fans. Many of them can be gleaned through direct experience. This knowledge applies to appropriate 'dress code': everyone should wear a club shirt, or clothes in club colours (or in the colours of friendly clubs). On the ultras stand it is required to stand at all times and take part in cheering and singing. However, in the case of away matches the behaviour must also be oriented towards additional 'attractions': strong police presence and

(increasingly rare in recent times) the possibility of rival fan attacks. Acting in accordance with the expectations and rules guarantees that the researcher will not experience any critical comments or threats.

The fieldwork was conducted mostly among supporters of Lechia Gdańsk (club from Polish Extraleague) and was related to availability and living in Gdańsk (single observations were conducted on the ultras stands of Legia Warsaw, Motor Lublin, Śląsk Wrocław and Wisła Płock). Moreover, Lechia fans belong to the 'elite' in the Polish landscape, both in quantitative terms (a few thousand engaged supporters regularly attending ultras stands) and environmental terms (they are held in high regard and esteem, even in the eyes of their rivals). In the case of fieldwork in Gdańsk, research was conducted in the period 2013–2018 (visits to the stadium at Lechia continued after concluding the book). In terms of away matches, ethnographic records and travel notes have been included (travelling on a bus with Lechia fans). It is worth emphasizing that anonymous travel in an organized group of fans is not possible in the Polish context. The regulations of companies managing the Polish league system (*Ekstraklasa SA*) state that supporters' associations have to submit the list of fans with personal data of all travellers. As a consequence, to travel with fans, it was always necessary to meet and know people from supporters' associations (called 'The Lions of the North' in the case of Lechia Gdańsk). Therefore, from the first match, some people were aware that there was a researcher among them. This, however, did not result in any form of leniency: rules functioning in fan environments concern all travellers with no exceptions. Observations from matches/trips are presented in the following chapters.

In addition to participating in matches, the research also included fieldwork from other 'no-match' activities important to Polish fans, such as the Independence March (nationwide parade on 11 November), Fans' National Pilgrimage to Bright Mountain (*Jasna Góra*) monastery (annual meeting of supporters in a monastery that is a holy place for Roman Catholics), fan tournaments, social and charity campaigns, and conferences organized by fans. Data from fieldwork were supplemented by content analysis of press releases, websites, social media and online forums.

Extensive empirical data have been collected as a result of individual in-depth interviews with representatives: supporters of local clubs, supporters'

associations, municipal councils, local media/newspapers, Supporters United local centres, the Polish Football Association, the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, beneficiaries of fan activism, and police ('spotters'). Quotations from interviews are marked as follows: Polish Football Association: [PZPN]; Ministry of Sport and Tourism: [MST]; representatives of Supporters United centres: [city_Supporters United]; representatives of supporters' association: [club_SA]; supporters: [club_supporter]; local officials: [city_City Council]; journalists: [city_journalist]; beneficiaries of fan activism: [city_beneficiary]; and police: [city_spotter]. In several cases, for example when hooligan and illegal issues were evaluated, quotations have been marked 'anonymous respondent'. In total, in the period 2013–2018, eighty-eight interviews were conducted: with 11 female fans and 77 male supporters. Generally, the gender of respondents is not marked after quotations, and the only exceptions are related to the 'gender' issue (when the situation of female fans is investigated). Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 3 hours. Table 1 contains the names of the clubs (with brief descriptions) of the supporters-respondents.

Table 1 The names of the clubs from which supporters-respondents come from

Club	City	Division (2019/2020 season)
Arka	Gdynia	Extraleague
Chrobry	Głogów	I League
Cracovia	Cracow	Extraleague
GKS	Bełchatów	I League
GKS	Katowice	II League
GKS	Tychy	I League
Górnik	Zabrze	Extraleague
Hutnik	Kraków	III League
Korona	Kielce	Extraleague
Lech	Poznań	Extraleague
Lechia	Gdańsk	Extraleague
Legia	Warsaw	Extraleague
ŁKS	Łódź	Extraleague
Miedź	Legnica	I League
Motor	Lublin	III League
Polonia	Warszawa	III League
Ruch	Chorzów	III League
Śląsk	Wrocław	Extraleague
Widzew	Łódź	II League
Wisła	Płock	Extraleague

Recruitment for interviews often required many attempts, diverse communication strategies and sometimes official documents (as in the case of consent to an interview with police officers). The most challenging aspect was gaining permission from the fans involved in the hooligans' fight. Undoubtedly, this dimension requires further research, because only a few hooligans agreed to answer questions. Groups of hooligans are subject to strong surveillance by the police, so they must be vigilant regarding any person outside their group. In each of these cases, the conversation took place after several months of 'negotiations' and only thanks to recommendations received from other supporters. This is a matter of fundamental importance as, generally, most of the interviews with the engaged supporters (not only hooligans) would not have taken place without these recommendations, 'asking for contact' and so on. The term 'snowball sampling' (see Naderifar et al. 2017) acquires a distinctive meaning in this case.

It is worth mentioning the risk that is associated with a research process. Recommendations from other supporters allow the respondents to recognize the researcher as trustworthy. The fans do not allow unknown and untrusted people into their circle, as they operate in a highly contained environment. Gained trust was therefore a sign of acceptance, but it also meant that the respondents could expect something in return—first and foremost, that the researcher would describe them in a better light. They could perceive the researcher instrumentally. On the other hand, a researcher who gains such a level of trust (and evidence of sympathy as well) can feel the pressure to return the favour, for example with a less critical look at pathological phenomena. These doubts caused by people from other backgrounds (police, officials, journalists) have been included in the study. Their view allows the researcher to evaluate fans from different perspectives, and it makes the process of data analysis more critical.

It is worth noting that the respondents might idealize issues relating to hooligan activity, which is difficult to verify since the author has no access to this domain. One should be particularly sensitive to the discourse of 'honour' that involves respecting the rules (the only opportunity to verify this discourse was to present it to the 'opponents' and follow their

discussions on Internet forums, which, in some cases, made it possible to prepare a more objective evaluation). The hooligan world in Poland is characterized by a continuous struggle for 'authenticity' and monopolization of high esteem. It resembles the construction of reputation described in ethnographic research from different countries. Therefore, during the collection of data and their analysis, a reflexive and critical approach was essential, and this made the entire research process more 'objective'.

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1

History of Polish Fandom: Communism, Post-Transformation Violence and the Division of Functions

To understand the specific nature of Polish fandom it is crucial to analyse its history. Some particular phenomena and social processes of the past decades have had an impact on the formation of the fan movement, both in terms of the internal dimensions (bottom-up mechanisms) and external imperatives (legal regulations, the state apparatus of violence, media influence, etc.). This is why it is very important to look at the historical development of football fandom in Poland and to adopt a multidimensional perspective.

Fandom in Communist Poland

As can be seen from its history, the fan movement in Poland is subject to transformation and cultural modernization and is far from a one-dimensional phenomenon. It dates back to the early 1970s, when fans of a number of clubs (ŁKS Łódź, Polonia Bytom, Lechia Gdańsk, Legia Warsaw) started to organize support for their teams. At the time, Polish stadiums were visited by clubs taking part in the European Cup games (such as Feyenoord Rotterdam and *Saint-Étienne*) and the behaviour of

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their supporters provided inspiration for Polish fans. Legia fans, for example, were greatly impressed by the Dutch supporters who arrived in Warsaw:

> For football supporters in Warsaw the greatest sensation was the Feyenoord fans who followed their team in their thousands. The guests presented something that was completely new in Poland, something that could be seen here for the first time. Almost all of them wore white-and-red club t-shirts and scarves, they had trumpets and flags, different sorts of pipes and rattles, and (…) they wore huge top hats with "Feyenoord" written on them. The sight was really impressive and the atmosphere they created during the game was something incredible, something that was bound to be remembered for years to come.[1]

This influence, however, was only superficial. Indeed, restricted access to information (subject to control by the authorities) and a lack of elementary knowledge about fandom culture in other countries made it impossible to develop a relationship of 'interdependence'. Although Polish fans tried to imitate Western examples, it was local animosities that were to function as the main factor behind the formation of 'firms' supporting Polish football clubs. They were first organized to protect their 'own area' against 'strangers', that is, supporters of clubs from other cities. Animosities were further fuelled by the fact that some clubs were affiliated with official state institutions (e.g. Legia was an army club, and Wisła Cracow was a club of the Citizens' Militia (Milicja Obywatelska, MO, the communist police). The editor of a fan magazine explains:

> I think that Poles have something like that in their blood. We are different than Slovaks, Czechs, even than Hungarians, who have their hooligan crews. It's in in the blood, this street aggression, things like beating up a guy at a disco because he's a stranger, he frowns on us, he picks up our girls. (…) Back in the 70s there was also an important division between 'git-people' and hippies. 'Git-people' arrived at the stadiums and they brought a lot of this prison element. [Personal interview]

[1] https://www.facebook.com/StrefaKibolii/photos/a.1729198494022697/1966495420293002/?type=1&theater (accessed 3 June 2020).

'Git-people' (*Gitowcy*) were people with a criminal background who were familiar with prison culture—they knew its jargon and code of rules. The culture of 'git-people' reached its heyday in the first half of the 1970s and was the strongest in large urban areas, where the first and most important fan crews appeared. Although the importance of this subculture began to decline at the end of the decade, its patterns of behaviour evolved in the fan movement. They included hostility to 'strangers' and uniformed services, and a strong sense of loyalty to the group and its principles, which was crucial in the case of dangerous trips to other cities. A Lechia fan recalls: 'In those days, everyone knew each other, you recognized everyone's face. There were no casual people. There were small groups; you could count on everyone because otherwise there was no chance. It cemented us together'. Another key element was tough character, required in physical combat. These rules are of great importance also in contemporary hooligan groups—they do not tolerate any form of cooperation with the police.

Communist authorities tried to channel the movement by setting up official fan clubs which received state sponsorship for their activity, including organization of social events and trips to away matches. According to the logic of the communist regime, the authorities tried to make fandom a 'planned' process, as was the case of centrally planned economy. 'Planning' was an inherent feature of the communist system: 'In the communist countries, the view of history as a structured change of society in a specific direction remains alive. But with it, there survives at the same time the idea that this change is leading inevitably to the realization of communist ideals' (Elias 2009: 18).

Sport was one of the most important elements of propaganda discourse, as it served as 'proof' of the superiority of the ideals of communism over capitalism. Fans and their 'rebellious' behaviour tried to break down this discourse. This policy involved the establishment of nationwide 'fan clubs' organizing regular meetings of representatives of their local branches. Their activity was supervised by communist party activists. However, the real fan movement was a grass-roots initiative in opposition to the political system of the day. Towards the end of the 1970s, informal groups of football fans were active in nearly thirty clubs (Goksiński 2014: 389). Figurations of fans were formed by young people

(students) and workers (the working class). Although they did not differ from the rest of society, as a group they tried to behave spontaneously, or at least made an effort to resist 'ideological exploitation' pursued by the authorities.

The policy of communist authorities aimed to create a one-class society dominated by the workers' movement. The structure of the economy, based on heavy industry, mining and agriculture, was to serve the functional uniformity. The communist party monopolized all aspects of life, but the state monopoly was not the result of a natural process of historical tensions and competition as in the civilizing process described by Elias. The mechanism of centralization served the 'concentration of all social resources for the implementation of both the target goals of the system and its sub-targets. For these reasons, the system has not only a centralist, but also hierarchical nature. Organizational units located at the lower levels of the organizational structure are subordinated to a higher level' (Tarkowski 1994: 218). The country was 'integrated' by closing the borders and restricting opportunities to discover other cultures and values. At the same time, society was not integrated from the 'inside', as there was no development of civic attitudes (except for the underground structures of anti-communist opposition), or a sense of community which would not be imposed by coercion. Indeed, communism stimulated the development of the 'homo Sovieticus' mentality (Tischner 1992) based on a conformist attitude, lack of individual initiative and dependence on the system. Although in the 1970s the fan movement began to take on an organizational form, it was not a coherent cultural formation. Hence, it is difficult to talk about a committed 'social identity' of the fan.

Many respondents recalling that period, despite their awareness of living under an unfavourable system, emphasized that the MO, the communist police, was much less prepared to deal with fan incidents than modern services. In cases that required intervention, the Militia arranged everything in the simplest ways, and benefited from the fact that militiamen commanded great respect: 'These were different times; after all, only fifteen policemen were enough to appease everyone because of respect they had' [Arka Gdynia_supporter]. Also the media, controlled by communist authorities, noticed only positive aspects of supporting. Although one reason for this was the ideology of 'law and social order', the fact was

that except for some occasional incidents fans were not a 'problem' in the 1970s, and they could be seen as a significant part of the whole propaganda project related to social 'massification' of sport. Moreover, the level of sensitivity to violence was different, and what today is assessed as unacceptable could be regarded as 'normal' at the time.

The 1980s were a period of decline of the communist state. The beginning of the decade saw a social revolution leading to the emergence of the Solidarity movement. At the same time, the results of opinion polls showed that Polish society was aware of the pathological nature of the system, for example overgrown bureaucracy, bribery, cronyism, poor organization of work, and excessive influence of the communist party on the economy (Koralewicz and Ziółkowski 1990). The inefficiency of the system (empty shelves in shops and food rationing were a part of daily life for the majority of people) was manifested in rampant inflation, reaching a level exceeding 70% in 1988. The system which was supposed to bring prosperity in fact led the state to economic collapse and 'unplanned' system transformation. Jacek Tarkowski aptly describes the final years of communism in Poland: 'instead of talking about crisis, we should rather talk about a state of permanent backwardness' (1994: 205).

In the 1980s, news of the activity of English 'hooligans' reached Poland and the level of football-related violence increased. Owing to the official 'success propaganda', the scale of the phenomenon was never publically acknowledged. For example, as unofficially reported, in the riots during the 1980 Polish Cup final between Legia Warsaw and Lech Poznań there was at least one dead and several hundred injured. On the other hand, the same period saw the stands become a scene of anti-communist activity. Slogans such as 'Solidarity' (*Solidarność*) and 'Down with the commies' (*Precz z komuną*) were often to be heard in Lechia Gdańsk stadium (Wąsowicz 2006; Kossakowski 2011). Rioting against the authorities and fights with the police have remained a distinctive feature of Polish fans ever since. Official 'fan clubs' organized by the authorities perished, and fans organized themselves in their own way, which was usually manifested in mass trips to away matches. Taken on regular trains, the trips were spontaneous and involved binge drinking and fights with opposing fans. Law enforcement officers responded reactively, and there was no special law regulating football matches. The most common 'strategy' of

the Citizens' Militia was to punish the most hot-headed supporters by beating them and to release them home. The chaos of the fall of the state system was matched by the lack of any serious structures of the fan movement. The fatalistic mood of the end of an era was dominated by violence between fans, and between the police and fans.

The 'Decivilizing Spurts' of the 1990s

The fall of the socio-political system resulted in a phenomenon described by sociologists as a 'social vacuum' (Nowak 1981). The term refers to a situation in which there is a gaping hole—no civic communities, associations or grass-roots initiatives—between the level of abstractly perceived nation and the level of individuals focused on family life. The elements of social fabric enhancing the development of functional differentiation in the space of community and citizenship were not formed. As a result, human activity was confined to the private sphere; in other words, individuals 'withdrew' to their small groups. At the level of the system, institutional instruments of terror and coercion—at least theoretically—tamed 'uncivilized' behaviour of individuals, while ideological censorship blocked the possibility of manifestation of alternative ways of thinking in order to 'integrate' people in the communist spirit.

The first period of political transformation (1989) saw the new democratically elected authorities, without stable structures, having to face the necessity of suppressing enormous inflation and high unemployment and supporting the collapsing economy, which was not able to compete in a free market environment. In 1990, the unemployment rate was at 6.6%, and reached 14.9% in 1995; in 1991, the gross domestic product fell to 80% of that recorded in 1989, and returned to this level only in 1996 (GUS 2019). The most dramatic situation was in the cities where previously strong, state-owned industrial companies were not able to meet the demands of free-market reality. The collapse of such companies often meant a degeneration of urban centres, whose residents had to look for jobs in other parts of the country (or, after 2004, abroad). Political turbulence (between 1989 and 1997 Poland had eight prime ministers) did not help to resolve the economic problems.

Apart from these problems, there was also anachronistic law and disputes about the impact of the old communist apparatus on public life. All this meant that the field of football was left to itself. A Lechia Gdańsk supporter recalls that period as follows:

> Shortly after the transformation of the political system, it was necessary to sort out the state from the scratch and deal with completely different, more important matters, and there wasn't enough time for such things like football. Nobody had time to deal with FIFA procedures, fandom procedures, not even safety in the streets, let alone in the stadiums. The law enforcement agencies were completely unprepared; we based on the model of supporting from the times of the People's Republic of Poland, so supporting meant a constant struggle with the past system.

Consequently, the first years of the democratic system in the discipline were characterized by large-scale disintegration, nepotism and corruption. A bizarre situation occurred on the last match day of the 1992/1993 season, when two clubs that could win the national championship—Legia Warsaw and ŁKS Łódź—won their matches with a difference of six goals. Suspicions of match-fixing prompted football authorities to award the title to the third team in the table—Lech Poznań. The culmination of the pathological situation in Polish football came with a corruption scandal involving more than fifty clubs and resulting in charges against about 600 people. What is important in the context of the interpretive framework used in this study is that tackling corruption required legislative changes which created the offence of bribery in sport (introduced into the Criminal Code on 1 July 2003). Thus, the development of the state apparatus and law was necessary to 'modernize' the football field.

The corruption scandal was not at all conducive to laying sound foundations for the football world in Poland. The problem was serious as it did not only concern particular clubs, their coaches or fraudulent players. The practice would not have been possible without 'networking' and without the interdependence between corrupt 'players' and the structures of the PZPN. One result of the corruption scandal (the PZPN did not implement the anti-corruption resolution) was an unprecedented move: the minister of sport appointed a commissioner who took charge of the

football association. When the PZPN authorities were suspended, FIFA threatened to ban the Polish national team from the elimination to the 2010 World Cup, and the Polish press voiced concerns that it might also ban Poland from hosting the European Championship in 2012 (TVN24.pl 2009).

It is hardly surprising that the scandal, coupled with the very poor level of the Polish football league, did not foster good relations between the fans and the football authorities. Indeed, until Zbigniew Boniek was elected president of PZPN in 2012, these relations were antagonistic; many fans had perceived PZPN as 'the biggest enemy for Polish fans'. In the last decade of the twentieth century, the situation deteriorated owing to the very poor level of the national team, which from 1986 until 2002 failed to qualify for any championship event. The biographies of footballers and coaches which have been published over the years reveal the backstage of Polish football of the era. With informal networks, corruption and large amounts of alcohol on the one hand, and no proper stadium infrastructure or youth training system on the other, the scale of the failure was evident. Looking back, the first years after transformation can be seen as a period of problems, when the 'uncivilized' aspects of the social process required a response at the level of both the system and culture.

The instability of the situation in the country resonated in the stadiums. Indeed, in the early years of the post-1989 transformation the culture of violence in Polish football stadiums developed on an unprecedented scale. The police data indicated an increasing number of hooligan incidents: 190 cases in 1991, 220 in 1992, 440 in 1993, 584 in 1994, 906 in 1995, 917 in 1996 and 1075 in 1997 (Gorący 2009). A 'hardcore' supporter of ŁKS Łódź describes the atmosphere of those times in his two-volume diary (Ruban 2014, 2015). He recalls travelling across Poland in a most 'uncivilized' manner: free-riding on trains (endless conflicts with the conductors), vandalizing public property, heavy drinking (sometimes for several days), 'hunting' for supporters of opposing teams, shoplifting and conflicts with the police. A Miedź Legnica supporter recalls:

> Each trip meant a scrap, literally, every single trip. We travelled with the gear, wooden planks and stones; we ran away from the police; the police

escorted us across Poland. (…) the 1990s, it was like … bricks flying in the stadium, people threw just about anything. It was often a miracle that no one was killed every week. When you ripped out all those bricks from the stadium over and over again, the stadiums were already falling apart and there was no stuff left to fight with, just planks, bits of wood, fencing; [there was] no CCTV. (…) Back then, you ran around the city and fought because no one could do anything. How could they? And now you just go out and you're getting recorded.

A Lechia Gdańsk supporter has similar observations:

You couldn't split from the group because you'd be massacred. All of us kept together, so all of us got into fights. When there was a crew of a few hundred people, sometimes it happened that a hundred guys attacked frothing at their mouths with anger. That's what you call an *ustawka* [arranged fight, RK], not like today. We didn't use to take the gear with us, we could always find something on the spot. I remember when we chased the home guys in Wałbrzych and we ripped apart almost the whole fence around some allotments. We used anything we could get, fence planks, posts, bits of benches.

There was no Internet back then and you couldn't just look up everything, but still everyone knew what time we were leaving. After Poland team matches there were some wounded guys in every crew coming back to the train station. When we travelled on trains we unscrewed some panels in the carriage and hid our things not to get robbed, then we screwed them back on. We didn't buy tickets; we chipped in and bribed the conductors. We gave a fiver to one and a fiver to the other and we travelled for ten złotys. We were all bald shaved and wore heavy boots; they cracked shins no problem.

This phenomenon exemplifies 'decivilizing spurts' related to the fact that 'rising levels of danger and incalculability in social life quite quickly render people more susceptible to fears and fantasies' (Mennell 1996: 113). Stephen Mennell argues that in the case of the 'decivilizing process' one can pose two kinds of questions: 'The first group of questions are "structural": in what circumstances do the chains of interdependence in society begin to break, and thus why do levels of complexity,

differentiation, and integration start to decline? The second group concerns the outcome of such processes of structural unravelling for people's experience: what are the cultural and psychological consequences and the impact on people's day-to-day conduct?' (1996: 113–114).

In this study, it boils down to the following questions: How did structural changes and Polish post-1989 transformation influence fan culture? and What was their impact on the daily routine of individual supporters? In this context, it is worth quoting Norbert Elias: 'The armour of civilized conduct would crumble very rapidly if, through a change in society, the degree of insecurity that existed earlier were to break in upon us again, and if danger became as incalculable as it once was. Corresponding fears would soon burst the limits set to them today' (2012: 576). It is clear that the first years of the new system in Poland brought a change involving a high 'degree of insecurity' in different aspects of life, especially economic ones (Antonowicz and Grodecki 2016). Perhaps involvement in groups of football supporters compensated young people for the 'vacuum' of the initial period of the new reality, when the structures of civil governance were not yet developed and a meaningful agenda of identity formation outside the family was difficult to find. The lack of any structure organizing the life of supporters in terms of regulations led to very peculiar forms of a search for 'security':

> We had some locks, some chains to lock up the train compartment, to lock one end of the carriage, the other … Oh, my God … what a time … Today you are escorted by the police all the way. It didn't use to be like that back then, what police? [Górnik Zabrze_Supporters' Association]

Lack of control on the one hand and the patterns of fan behaviour on the other favoured spontaneous decisions which were often quite inexplicable from a rational point of view:

> There was this guy among Górnik Zabrze fans, a kind of leader. One day he travelled on his own across the whole country to a match with Pogoń Szczecin. And he arrived in the stand … all alone, so that everyone could see that he was there. And he left it, all alone … And then they chased him all the way to the station, so he jumped on the first train going wherever;

> not so much jumped, he just hung on to the handle at the back and went to the next station to escape them. [Górnik Zabrze_supporter]

A considerable proportion of the fan figuration consisted of individuals loyal to ultra-right-wing ideology; racist chants were often heard in the stadiums, and symbols of skinhead culture were a familiar sight. A supporter of Victoria Jaworzno recalls the local skinhead group as follows: 'In this group there were ideological national socialists, who showed their sympathies during matches by waving flags with a skull, shouting "SS SA Victoria", displaying the symbols of the KKK [Ku Klux Klan, RK] (…). The beating of a black player of Garbarnia [a club from Cracow, RK], which received wide coverage in the media, was associated with Victoria skinhead fans' (Simon 2014: 44). One of the fans interprets this as a result of the absence of the 'former' enemy (the communist system before 1989) and the prevailing post-transformation anomie:

> In general, at the beginning of the 90s, there was a crisis of values … I'm convinced that it also affected fans. The enemy had disappeared … When I travelled [to matches, RK], it struck me that some factions of fans, or some fans who were my friends or acquaintances, used slogans which can be described as Nazi, for example 'Our role model is Rudolf Hess' (*Naszym wzorem jest Rudolf Hess*), 'Barack 6, Zyklon B…' (*Barak* 6, cyklon B…) and so on. There were also Celtic crosses at that time. I think that this was a moment of some kind of ideological chaos, there was no clear form, no ideology that could attract them. And this ideology would have to meet several criteria, first of all it would have to be clear, to appeal to people who are steadfast, to go against the mainstream of the surrounding reality. [Lechia Gdańsk_supporter]

At that time, there was in fact no ideological proposal for fans. Most of them were young adult men from the cities in which industry and clubs were crumbling (most of them were managed by state-run agencies). They were students (mostly at primary and secondary schools) or poorly educated people who either were victims of transformation (unemployed themselves or with unemployed parents), or had experienced environmental and sports degeneration (a collapse of their clubs). A 'strong', radical right-wing proposal offered a substitute for group identity. In the

1990s, skinheads were a strong subculture and were able to recruit new members at the stadiums.

The democratic structures of the state did not have any tools at their disposal with which to react to hooligan incidents. In the first years of the 1990s, football matches were a similar scenario: fights between fans (at railway stations, in the streets, around the stadiums, in the stands), sometimes leading to invasion of the pitch (interruption of the sporting event), followed by police intervention and escorting of supporters to their stand or the train (Miedź Legnica supporter: 'The rules were like this: the police beat us, we beat the police, no one went to court. Today, when the police beat us, you go to court'). One perfect example is the situation at the Polish Cup Final in 1995 (Legia Warsaw vs GKS Katowice). An eyewitness to the events recalls them as follows:

> There were quite a lot of pigs [Pol. psy, psiarnia 'dogs', the police, RK] on the pitch; the Legia guys ran around and attacked them. The fuzz [Pol. wąsaci lit. 'the moustached ones', the police, RK] chased them to Żyleta [the Razor, the ultras stand in Legia stadium, RK], where the home guys repelled their attacks. Quite a few people were brutally beaten with truncheons. (…) The mounted police stormed in, but it didn't help, because Legia guys waved their huge flags on poles in front of the horses, which reared up with the pigs on their backs. (…) The Legia guys kept attacking the helmets (Pol. kaski, the riot police, RK) with anything they had at hand: benches, seats from Żyleta, ad banners. Two water cannons drove on the pitch and poured water just wherever. (…) Quite a few people run after the cannons trying to break them. The fights went on for over an hour and a half. It was just one huge fuckup. (Oldschool Fanatics, no. 1/2016, p. 5)

The above description reads a bit like a report from the battlefield, and yet this was not the only case of riots and acts of violence at the time. What is significant about the development of state structures understood as a monopolist in the use of violence is a kind of 'helplessness' of the police. It must be noted, however, that neither adequate legal regulations nor professional training in the field of crowd management strategies was present at the time. It is also worth remembering that countries such as England had been developing appropriate tools (both legal and practical)

for a long time. One element that helped greatly in this respect was works by Clifford Stott (see Hoggett and Stott 2010), who also trained Polish policemen in recent years.

It should be stressed that in most cases confrontation between fans was not planned or arranged. The year 1997 marked an important turning point: in view of the situation in the stadiums (e.g. in the riots during the Polonia Warsaw vs Legia Warsaw match a club building was set on fire and thirty-seven police officers were injured), the government decided to introduce the *Act on Mass Events Security* (*Ustawa z dnia 22 sierpnia 1997 roku o bezpieczeństwie imprez masowych*; in 1995 Poland ratified the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches). The new legislation was an important step in the fight against stadium violence in Poland. The act regulated a number of issues related to football matches, such as the use of pyrotechnics, and introduced stadium bans. For a long time, however, its implementation was merely symbolic, as its internal coherence was questioned (Dróżdż 2014). As will be shown in further parts of this study, subsequent amendments to this law have affected fan culture.

The Beginning of Functional Differentiation

Although the new regulations did not eradicate violence from the stadiums, acts of aggression became considerably less frequent. While 1998 saw as many as 826 incidents, the annual figures for the 2000s rarely exceeded 200, and fell to a historic minimum of 105 in 2010 (Piotrowski 2012). The turn of the century brought substantial changes in the fan movement on many levels. The eclectic culture of the 1990s—in which there was no division into ultras and hooligans, and any kind of activism was virtually non-existent—was slowly changing. As will be shown in the following chapters, this culture began to undergo 'functional differentiation': a division into various spheres of activity was becoming clearer. Hooligan incidents became increasingly less spontaneous, and well-trained fighters began to appear in hooligan crews more often. The consolidation of the state apparatus was another important factor at play—in the new century the authorities began to react to stadium violence more

energetically and effectively. Gradually the pressure of system imperatives became stronger, which had an impact on Polish football as it forced the reactions of fans and their adaptation.

The range of activities in which fans can become involved as part of their culture is currently far greater than in the 1990s. One fan mentions such activities, stressing, however, that they cannot always be treated separately:

> And in my opinion, we would have to distinguish not only ultras, picnics [consumer fans, RK], hooligans, but also graffiti artists, trip organizers and organizers of charity events. We could go still further and distinguish organizers of marketing campaigns and groups putting up posters around the city, because we have such guys. Or, for example, there are people who can write and create websites. So, they are fans but they are also editors who do everything voluntarily. And, for example, they go to away matches and, I don't know, let's say they train martial arts. And when there is some kind of mobilization, they go somewhere to fight. And how to classify them? Is it being an editor or a hooligan? [GKS Katowice_Supporters' Association]

The above quotation from an experienced fan, who is well-educated and could be classified as a member of the middle class, demonstrates the extent of the current differentiation of fan culture. Indeed, the history of the fan movement has seen its division into many different domains. Most of these will be subject to closer examination in the next chapters, with a particular focus on the space of hooligan, ultras and activist involvement.

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2

'You Have to Scream Your Head Off!' Mechanical Solidarity and Rules of Gathering: Structural Dimensions of Fandom Culture

A distinctive division of the world of fans into hooligans, ultras and activists does not mean that there is no common denominator for all the supporters. It should be stressed that despite 'functional differentiation', the most influential group are hooligans. Their principles, way of behaving and modes of dealing with circumstances resonate in the entire structure of fandom. 'There is no democracy' in the fan movement—it is based on the principles of hierarchy, subordination and sacrifice of the individual for the good of the group. In such a demanding environment (with the police and, above all, hostile supporters of other teams looming), maintaining the cohesion of the group requires restrictive and uncompromising strategies. This chapter describes some structural mechanisms that maintain order in fan groups. They include both a number of internal 'imperatives' (environmental rules) and a system of building relationships with 'others', including fans of other clubs, in order to strengthen the position and significance of those groups. Although the structure of the fan culture is hermetic, its frames can be intertwined with those of other actors.

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Fan Figuration, Common Consciousness and the Ecstasy of 'We'

In order to describe the structure of fandom culture it will be helpful to incorporate the term 'figuration' developed in the framework of the processual/figurational sociology of Norbert Elias. A figuration consists of 'individuals that create different relationships for various purposes: the actors come and go, the objects of their actions are constantly changing, new categories of goals appear as well as new techniques of entering into relationships. From this diversity, however, some permanent patterns a posteriori emerge, which individuals accept unconsciously or half-consciously. One of these regularities is the stratification of figuration, which can be described precisely thanks to the concept of level of integration' (Bucholc 2013: 29).

In the case of football supporters, it is obvious that generations of fans come and go, and that conditions in the field of football are subject to change, as can be seen in the context of commercialization processes (see Dixon 2013). There are also new ways of forming relations, including the rapidly growing role of Internet forums as a space of fan identity. However, some 'old' categories of goals and some patterns are still the same. Importantly, the most primary category ('a goal in itself') is the Club (the capital letter is not by chance), representing permanence and providing a stable ground for both common and individual identity. The club sometimes becomes 'the love of [one's] life' (Pope 2017), 'the way and meaning of life', 'passion', and has a 'mnemonic energy' (Majewski 2012: 49). This explains situations where fans fight fierce battles for the preservation of traditional names, crests and colours of their clubs (see Hayton et al. 2017; Kossakowski 2017). Such symbols provide a sense of durability and heritage, especially at a time when the old stadium (the 'old cathedral', 'our old home') is replaced by a modernized or new one (which has no 'spirit of the past'), and the players have no connections with the local community. Supporters often make reference to the *longue durée* or tradition: 'The Oldest Club in Warsaw' (*Najstarszy klub stolicy*; Polonia Warsaw); the chant 'Kolejorz', used by Lech Poznań fans (in the local dialect the word *kolejorz* means 'a railway man', which points to the roots

of the club, connected with the railway industry); and the slogan 'We create history' (*My tworzymy historię*) used by Lechia Gdańsk supporters. In the mining region of Upper Silesia (where many collieries have been closed down) fans of many clubs invoke the industrial heritage and 'those times' in the communist era when the clubs sponsored by the coal industry were the most successful (Górnik Zabrze, Ruch Chorzów).

The club, with its colours, symbols and a sense of togetherness, invokes 'common consciousness', which Emile Durkheim defined as 'the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society [that] forms a determinate system with a life of its own' (1893: 39). Although the most familiar type of such a system of beliefs is religion, the notion has more potential applications. In the case of sport, 'common consciousness' can be related to the Club. In this context, the Club is viewed not only as an organization, institution, management, board, or even players or infrastructure. As far as 'collective consciousness' is concerned, the Club is a composite of ideas, a conglomerate of symbols, legends, history and tradition. For devoted supporters, the status of both legendary players and coaches is timeless. Sometimes, the Club is a cult object, or even amounts to some kind of 'invisible religion' (Antonowicz and Wrzesiński 2009).

Symbols and heritage play an integrating and focusing role: they enable people (even from different social classes) to find a common source of identification and a sense of togetherness. Although Polish clubs cannot be considered global brands with an international base of supporters, they provide a strong sense of identification in terms of the local environment:

> I think that Lechia is something special for the people of Gdańsk, something really important. When I drive around the city, I notice a lot of cars with characteristic mini t-shirt car hangers. Seeing them you conclude that identification with the club is quite substantial. (…) Lechia is certainly a symbol of this city, just like Neptune, like [Lech] Wałęsa. [Lechia Gdańsk_supporter]

The act of supporting is strongly communal in nature and it radically diminishes the role of class, age, education or particular features of the

individual. The phrases 'All together!' (*Wszyscy razem!*) and 'One voice of a thousand throats' (*Jeden głos tysiąca gardeł*) invoke the fusion of individuals into the community of emotional energy. Supporting involves tribal rituals which, in their niche, stand in opposition to the individualistic tendencies of contemporary societies. Today, individualism tends to dominate since 'we do not need enormous, quasi-tribal collective festivals based on Durkheim's mechanical solidarity, in which individuals would have a chance to behave in the same way and experience a sense of unity, belonging and collective identity' (Bucholc 2013: 212). It turns out, however, that some people still need them, and that the fusion of individual identity with a larger social organism—paradoxically—contributes to a sense of freedom:

> It makes me feel free when there are so many people together. If we really get into cheering, we start jumping; if there's one guy who takes off his t-shirt, in a second it turns out that half of the crowd has done the same. It's such an overwhelming feeling of freedom; for ninety or a hundred and twenty minutes, I've got my own world and I can do whatever. I'm not talking about excessive things, like flares and throwing verbal abuse, which also happens, because this is football and that's a part of it. When we're in the stand and we're this one group, we all do the same and it's an incredible feeling, it turns out I'm not an effing lunatic at all. There are a few thousand people here reacting just like me. [Lechia Gdańsk_Supporter]

This account can also be taken as evidence of an argument that sport provides the modern individual with an opportunity to release emotions and tension (Elias and Dunning 1986). The surge of emotions enables an escape from the mundane: 'It is through the singing of songs that the fans invent themselves as a unified body. This creation of themselves into a coherent social body, occupying a particular spatial area, is important to the possibility of imagining their activities to be liminal' (King 1997: 585). In the comment from a fan quoted above, 'freedom' means a liminal state, a sense of finding oneself beyond social conventions (and sometimes without clothes), in the ocean of spontaneity and in the state of suspension of all differences. In such a state supporters from various social classes may experience identity fusion (Kossakowski and Besta

2018) and a temporary blurring of hierarchy. This creates a specific 'communitas' (Turner 1969), albeit limited for the duration of the match or the away trip. This explains why some supporters decide to go on long-distance trips (a few hundred kilometres) for their team. The desire to see the game is one thing, but there is also the craving for 'immersing yourself' in this liminality. A match or a trip with other fans provides an opportunity to escape from the routine of everyday life, which is why on such occasions many fans allow themselves to indulge in 'non-standard' behaviour. In the community of fans both 'non-standard' and abnormal standards are acceptable.

The common mood triggers a strong sense of group solidarity focused on one objective: supporting the beloved club. This leads to the release of emotional energy, creating a sense of power, control and euphoria. As put forward by Goffman (1961), euphoria is a combined result of the rules of a gathering and spontaneous engagement. The rules of gathering in ultras terraces are introduced to make people aware of what is expected and appropriate. The state of ecstasy can be confirmed by a quote from a Lech Poznań supporter: 'In the second half, we got higher and higher and (…) it was total madness until the end of the game' (*To My Kibice!* 2015: 7). According to Ramon Spaaij (2008), excitement and emotional arousal are one of the key dimensions of hooligan identity. In addition, group emotions are saturated with symbolic elements: in ecstatic support, fans wave their scarves and flags and keep repeating the name of their club dozens of times. This enables them to enter a state similar to that of a trance, to perform an embodied archaic ritual.

Durkheim (as well as Randall Collins, who continues the tradition of his thought; see 2004) points out that in the communal and ecstatic experience the emotional energy of the ritual not only translates into the strengthening of 'collective consciousness' or intensifies the value of symbols, but above all strengthens interpersonal bonds and group solidarity. This is confirmed by the following account:

> You can feel this emotional bond, not so much with the team, but with those people around, and this makes us one great community. You experience things together, you grieve together. I think it's one of the reasons why these groups are so strong. (…) You know, you are friends with some of

> them, you can say, or acquaintances, you know some of them better, some of them not so well, but this group has grown pretty close. Over time, some people leave, some new people come, but it keeps going. (…) I think the whole group of fans, in general, is composed of some small communities. They are based around neighbourhoods, some sort of thematic groups, or, as in our case, around associations. They are small communities, very closely-knit, and they are in contact on a daily basis. [Lechia Gdańsk_supporter]

'Group solidarity' is not confined to the stadium: 'Symbols and rituals associated with fandom also go beyond the stadium experience, as fans draw emotional energy from these symbols while cooking, eating, drinking, and conversing in more emotionally muted settings' (Cottingham 2012: 181). Examples from Poland confirm this observation. For many engaged fans, the sense of community is not only about having 'a couple of beers' before the match and going to the stadium together, but also involves everyday activities, social meetings, and sometimes friendships or families. The emotions of the match become a repetitive ritual (like a religious one, such as the Sunday Mass) which supporters desire to follow: '(…) if someone's bitten by the bug, they love what they're doing and these matches stimulate their excitement or (…) even give them some kind of positive adrenaline, then yes, it's something you really look forward to' (Arka Gdynia_Supporter). The football season functions as a space of repeated rituals ('interaction ritual chain' as Randall Collins put it, 2004) and a weekly match provides an extraordinary dose of ecstatic emotions. In this sense, the world of football permeates the everyday practices of supporters, and, moreover, the 'repeatability' of the match cycle functions as an organizing principle of their existential identity: '(…) on a daily basis football is an important element in the structuring of many people's lives (…). Moreover, it may be that other key organizing processes of everyday life are becoming ever more invalid leaving people clinging to football as a way of giving meaning to their increasingly fragmented lives' (Stone 2009: 13). Even more than football as a cultural imperative, the community of fans plays a structuring role for many people, especially in that it provides them with clear, unambiguous order.

It seems justified to describe the community of 'hardcore' supporters as a specific version of Durkheimian 'mechanical solidarity' under the conditions of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2005). In other words, it can be argued that the community of supporters is a kind of mechanical solidarity existing in the extensive spectrum of (liquid) 'organic solidarity'. Importantly, that 'co-existence' is in fact observed today: 'In modern societies, the more complex, "organic" solidarity prevails; in small and traditional communities, a relatively fixed and undifferentiated "mechanical" solidarity exists. The formation of football clubs and the regular, voluntary association of supporters and players help to counteract the feelings of atomization and alienation that corrupt individuals within large, impersonal cities' (Giulianotti 1999: 15). Paradoxically, the biggest global football brands run their activities thanks to the 'organic' structure of the contemporary economy (contracts from corporate sponsorship, revenue from TV broadcasting rights), but at the same time they are supported by devoted fan communities based on 'mechanical' principles. It is worth noting that even 'functional differentiation' in fandom culture does not invalidate the 'mechanical' aspects of the structure of this culture.

The history of football brings numerous examples of the clash between the traditional ('mechanical') solidarity of fans and the new, business-like ('organic') order (cases of Manchester United, see Brown 2007; FC Liverpool, see Millward 2011; Legia Warsaw, see Kossakowski and Bieszke 2017). In most cases, Polish clubs are managed by private entrepreneurs or city councils, and, apart from lower leagues, supporters do not have an influence on how they are run. Some exceptions to the rule, however, include the case of Lechia Gdańsk, where representatives of supporters' associations (called 'The Guardians of the Seal') had a say in the constitution of the company. A fan website announced this as follows: 'The constitution includes a system of checks required to defend the white-and-green [the colours of Lechia, RK] heritage in the event of attempts amounting to the *groclinization* of the club from Gdańsk' (Kocjan 2009; the term *groclinization* refers to the case of Dyskobolia Grodzisk Wielkopolski, a club from western Poland whose name was changed to Groclin, the name of the company owned by the entrepreneur who bought the club. After a few years, the owner sold the place in Ekstraklasa and Groclin disappeared; Dyskobolia started anew in one of

the lower divisions). It is worth noting that the use of such phrases as 'the guardians of the seal' and 'heritage' stress the meaning of history and tradition, which are key elements in the cultivation of 'common consciousness'.

In the fan figuration, an individual is defined through the lens of relationships with others, and group identity permeates personal identity. The personal pronoun 'I' is often replaced by 'We' (e.g. 'It's us, fans of Śląsk [Wrocław]', *To my, kibice Śląska*): 'There is no one who is not and has never been interwoven into a network of people, and this is spoken of or thought of by means of concepts based on the pronouns, or by other analogous means of expression. One's conception of such figurations is a basic condition of one's self-conception as a separate person' (Elias 1978: 128). However, keeping such a 'figuration' under control requires specific mechanisms of integration and discipline. Achieving collective goals—high-quality support (decibels 'crushing' the rivals), or preparing a large choreography in the whole ultras sector takes more than just 'love for the club'—it requires clear and consistent strategies that do not involve democratic dialogue, a long process of deliberation or doubts. And such strategies can only be developed by the most experienced decision-makers—people who are respected, have charisma and, last but not least, are in excellent physical condition and have good fighting skills.

Functional Imperatives of Social Cohesion

It is not only in hooligan crews that esteem and position in the hierarchy are gained thanks to merit and firm attitude. The same is true in the ultras stands, where the key role is performed by the so-called conductor (Pol. *gniazdowy*, lit. 'the one in the nest', positioned on top of a steel structure behind the goal in the middle bottom of the ultras sector). The fans performing this function can also be seen in many ultras stands around the world (e.g. a *capo* in Italy; see Doidge 2015). Responsible for 'impression management', he (there are no women in that role in Poland) starts the chants and is in control of the script of the fan show, which means that he has to make decisions appropriate to the situation both on the pitch and in the stands. Such synchronization is not easy, especially considering

the fact that the conductor stands facing the spectators. The desired sound effect and dynamics depend on group integrity and the process involves channelling the action and behaviour of anything between several hundred and several thousand fans, which seems impossible to achieve without a particular integrity of the group. Consequently, the mode of conducting has to be punitive and conductors can point at particular individuals who do not display adequate involvement and tell them off on the microphone in front of thousands of people. The conductor is responsible for boosting and maintaining the spirit in the stands, especially when the situation on the pitch is unfavourable. For example, during one of the matches the following words could be heard from the conductor's 'nest': 'It's 0:0, and you give up! Do you remember how we enjoyed it when it was 1:4? If someone gives up, let them fuck off to another sector! I can see who's giving up! Louder, for fuck's sake!' (Personal observation). An observation note from one of the matches indicates that the work of the conductor involves a number of elements:

> The conductor uses a microphone, and the speakers are placed over the entire length of the ultras sector, so he can be heard by all the ultras. During the game, everyone in the sector stands, except for three occasions on which everyone sits down and stops singing. But this happens on the explicit command of the conductor. Sitting down is simply part of cheering. At his signal, everyone stands up and repeats the words of a song based on the theme of the 'Victory March'. From the very beginning of the match the conductor sets the style of cheering (sometimes supported by his colleague). He sets the tone and conducts the crowd. He has a specific way of motivating the supporters: he bluntly calls on them to sing louder. He uses various words for this purpose, for example: 'This sector is not for pussies', 'Fuck! Louder!'. Slogans, epithets and swear words are an important part of cheering. Songs with swear words appear interchangeably with the words of support for the players and the club. The conductor can feel the mood of the stands and can use it. He turns up the anger or stimulates ecstasy to the beat of the drum. Sometimes it seems that the sector is a battlefield, and that the conductor is a general leading his army to slaughter.

The conductor must therefore have significant skills to manage a specific crowd of people—mostly militant men who take their attendance at

the game much more seriously than, for example, supporters in family stands. This is why meeting the expectations takes a person who is reliable and respected: 'Only someone that people will listen to can become a conductor, so he must have charisma. It's common knowledge that supporting looks different with someone that everyone knows and has to listen to. It's a person who knows that he wants to lead these people, who is the leader of this group, who has achievements in the group, or has some success in, let's put it this way, persuasion' [Wisła Płock_supporter]. The conductor is responsible for the quality of cheering and is accountable for his efforts. At a Lechia away game, one of the decision-makers approached the 'nest' and asked the conductor to make more effort. In fact, fan support during the match was weak; after a few chants there were some longer periods of silence. A conductor from one of the Ekstraklasa clubs talks about his early days in this role as follows:

> You have to put some work into it. You also need people's support. You have to do it 100 per cent and have a vision of how to improve cheering, the quality of what's happening in the stands, and some charisma. It's a very time-consuming task.

He also mentions the psychological and emotional aspects of his role:

> In most cases, this is about psychology. You face away from the pitch, so it's very important to read from the expressions on people's faces what's happening behind you. You must feel what you can afford. This is mainly about observing people. Sometimes just a quick look at the pitch. (…) These are emotions. There are lots of people at the stadium. You can't control everyone. Let's say you're at a derby match and, for example, you can see an outbreak that spreads. And it's difficult to control it. You can try to do it, say something, scream that it's not a good moment, but you can also let it spread.

In Poland, fan stands are also responsible for maintaining the atmosphere if the situation on the pitch does not look good or their team is losing. Many of the most devoted fans say that the score does not matter (although in fact it is of great importance—success always affects the

turnout and reactions of fans), as it is important to support the club 'through thick and thin'. This view is reflected in the lines of a song which is very popular at Polish stadiums: 'Whether you win or not, I love you anyway' (*Czy wygrywasz, czy nie, ja i tak kocham cię*). One of the conductors comments on this as follows:

> [Club name, RK] is such a great club that sometimes, when the situation on the pitch didn't look good, or there was a low attendance, support was—paradoxically—better, because people did their best. In such situations people don't look at what happens on the pitch, but they want to use every moment to support the team. If you can see that there is pressure, you give them something more energetic. It was like that when we were losing 1:5. Sometimes there is better support at a match with a weaker opponent. And sometimes, when a match was under great pressure, the stadium was full, but support was weak. [Personal interview]

Similar 'paradoxes' concerning the attitude and behaviour of ultras supporters are also mentioned by the Widzew Łódź conductor:

> (…) after our relegation to the first league [the second level of competition, RK] there were many matches with teams which had a weak fan base, and still, our cheering was absolutely massive. We were so incredibly crazy for chanting then that I just couldn't get it. Imagine that we were so shameless that we talked among ourselves that good cheering after scoring a goal doesn't matter, and we deeply believed that everyone should think so. After all, what problem is it to sing loud when it goes well? (*Gniazdowy Widzewa*… 2013)

This comment can also be read as a declaration of being a 'real' and 'authentic' fan, not just a 'glory hunter' or a consumer. Every element of the fan craft is employed to demonstrate identity and borders. What can be a greater act of devotion to the club than 'screaming one's head off' when their team loses? Of course, this level of commitment takes many years of socialization in the fan movement, a process which also determines status and access to significant positions. The Widzew conductor describes what a 'perfect combination' in the ultras sector looks like:

> Everything has its appeal, and the best thing is to combine it all and adapt the chants to the events on the pitch, the score and, of course, the supporters' day. You can often feel that the stand does not react as it should, so you have to come up with something, stir up some people, and then, as a reward, give them a good song that can go on for a long time and let them go wild. If on top of that there is something interesting going on on the pitch, that class. (*Gniazdowy Widzewa*… 2013)

One such example is a situation which occurred during the Lechia Gdańsk match against Jagiellonia Białystok in November 2018 (at that time, Lechia was the leader and Jagiellonia—the second team in the league table; personal observation notes): 'Good situation in the table, high attendance, a stiff match on the pitch and a full ultras sector of Lechia fans made the whole "performance" very energetic. At the end of the match, when the home team was leading 3:2, the whole stadium joined in and even the fans from the "ordinary" sectors got up from their seats and began to cheer. This certainly would not have happened if the result had been unfavourable' [Field note].

In the fan environment, developing trust is a long-term process which has an impact on the stratification of its culture. The way to the centre begins on the fringes of the fan movement. Loyalty and devotion to the club and the community is the key to achieving the position of authority and respect. The hierarchy is based on the consolidation of tradition and seniority. As in any community, 'actors come and go', which results from such factors as generational change and economic migration (as mentioned above, this is an important external factor which determines the world of supporters after Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004). A supporter of Wigry Suwałki comments as follows: 'As for emigration, our crew has been strongly affected, and if it wasn't for the wave of new young guys and determination of a few people, it would be really hard for us. Most of the best guys went abroad or to other Polish cities to find a job' (Wigry Suwałki 2014: 48). Another factor at play when it comes to the size of the groups is a particular kind of 'betrayal'—cooperation with the police or 'inappropriate' behaviour. The latter is mentioned by an Arka Gdynia supporter who offended other fans when he was drunk and was expelled from the group as a result:

> (…) I got beastly drunk and I called our Wejherowo fan club names [an Arka fan club from a town about 20 km away from Gdynia, RK] during the game (…). The worst thing was that I'd had good relations with the old guys from Wejherowo until then, but alcohol mixed up my head and that's what happened. I gave up going to matches, (…) and some time later I found out about the 'ban'. (*Arce w pewnym okresie*… 2017: 64)

The above case confirms the uncompromising nature and the 'no mercy' principle that prevails in the fan environment. There is no room for individual differences; everyone must be subordinated to the common interest. Listed in the form of 'terms and conditions', the rules of Legia Warsaw ultras stand (called *Żyleta*, the Razor) are particularly clear about this:

> It is in this stand (…) that the heart of the Legia stadium will beat. To make sure that it beats as loud as possible, supporters from Legia fan groups would like to inform you about the rules in the stand.
>
> (1) It is everyone's DUTY to cheer and scream their head off supporting Legia Warsaw, the greatest club of the capital.
>
> (2) Everyone should follow the instructions of the conductor, the ultras and the decision-makers when cheering and performing match choreographies.
>
> (3) The outfit of each Legia fan is a white t-shirt and a scarf with the one and only crest of our club, that is the one from 1957. We only wear the colours of Legia and friends [friendly clubs, RK].
>
> (4) Everyone is obliged to proudly represent Legia also outside the stadium and to defend the honour and the flag of the beloved Club of the capital. Wearing the colours while under the influence of too much alcohol is unworthy of a Legia fan.
>
> (5) During the match everyone at *Żyleta* stands. When you are in the ULTRAS stand, remember that supporting is the most important thing during the match. Therefore, people who come to the stadium for other purposes are asked to take seats in other stands.
>
> (6) Supporters with a low record of match attendance are requested to take seats in the side sectors of the ULTRAS stand.
>
> (7) *Żyleta* is not Hollywood or a catwalk in Paris. Therefore, people who take useless videos or selfies and post them on social networking sites are not welcome. [*Zasady na nowej Żylecie* 2010]

As can be seen, the regulations are authoritative. They stress such elements as obligations for everyone in the stand (lack of space for individual comfort), uncompromising devotion ('scream your head off'), strict obedience and hierarchical order (decision-makers' instructions, access determined by seniority), dress code, restrictions concerning behaviour (alcohol, standing), the need to defend 'the sacred' (the colours, the flag and the honour of the club) and a ban on 'modern' behaviour (no selfies). Unlike in the case of 'organic solidarity', when it comes to symbols and cardinal principles there is no democracy and no room for interpretation. The above regulations involve social endeavours which are not viewed in terms of any official jurisdiction. However, they should be considered not only in the context of collective impression management but also in a broader sense: 'ordering (structuring) means making the ordered sector *meaningful*, e.g. arriving at a situation in which some concrete events usually follow a particular condition' (Bauman 1999: 76).

In this case, 'structuring' is authoritative and sanctions can be repressive. Suffice it to quote one point from the list of rules applying to trips to away matches, drafted by Lechia Gdańsk Supporters Association: 'It is strictly forbidden to wave the club colours out of private cars while travelling [to away matches]. Should they be lost, severe consequences will follow' (*Regulamin wyjazdowy*… 2014). It is worth noting that such rules refer to the content which lies at the heart of 'common consciousness'. The form and severity of punishment depend on the significance of the offence. The most serious offences are those against the core elements of common consciousness and its strictly regulated aspects (Durkheim 1893). The fan community shows no 'mercy' for those who change their club allegiance. It is enough to say that such cases are few and far between, or perhaps people who have committed such offences simply do not admit to it.

The actual function of punishment is to preserve social cohesion in a volatile situation by maintaining a sense of community. The defence of one's own culture and its fundamental principles is crucial and determines not only emotional reactions, but, in fact, the rational management of the community. This can be illustrated by the following observation made on the return journey of Lechia Gdańsk supporters

from one of their coach trips to away matches (night time hours, personal observation):

> A few drunken fans started to bang on the roof of the coach. After a few minutes we stopped and several people from the decision-making group (travelling on a different coach) entered the front door. They gave those who had been banging a few slaps on the face (the so-called *liść* 'a leaf' in fans' jargon). When 'justice was done', as they were leaving they said to the driver: 'If there are any more problems, just call'. After that, nobody dared to touch the coach for the rest of the journey to Gdańsk. [Field note]

Maintaining order among fans by themselves is sometimes accepted even by the 'enemy'—the police—as can be seen from the following observation. On another away trip one of the fans smoked on the coach and at one of the stops a couple of policemen entered the front door. The young man who was smoking got told off by an older supporter for being irresponsible (the police could turn the coach back and fine the driver). The smoker tried to demonstrate his status as an experienced fan and asked his adversary how many trips to away matches he had been on. The answer was loud and clear: 'Eighty, so I know what I'm saying. Do you want them to turn us back?' He instantly put out his cigarette—he must have found it difficult to challenge the opinion of someone with a much higher record of away matches (he had only been on a dozen trips). One of the policemen said, 'OK, let them sort it out themselves'. Maintaining the order and consistency of the group while travelling to away matches is particularly important, because even a small incident can be disastrous: the convoy of coaches can be stopped or turned back by the police (which means missing the match). Therefore, each group of supporters has a special rule that only 'decision-making' members are authorized to talk to the police.

Supporters of most clubs have special restrictions concerning trips to away games. In the 2016/2017 season Jagiellonia Białystok fans introduced a ban on such trips for women and youth under the age of sixteen, rationalizing this as follows: 'There are too many girls who cannot react properly. Such trips are not for children, sometimes there is a skirmish with the police—they beat us with truncheons and there is gas all around'

(*Nowy regulamin*… 2016). Similar restrictions operate among the fans of Pogoń Szczecin; their list also includes a total ban on drinking alcohol and the use of intoxicants on the way to the match (*Regulamin wyjazdowy* n.d.). The fact that drinking is permitted on the way back indicates that some 'ludic' and 'carnival' elements are allowed, but only after the duty (mostly commitment to supporting) has been fulfilled. Extensive regulations concerning both home and away matches were also introduced by the fans of Lech Poznań: women and young people under the age of thirteen are not allowed in the central area of the ultras sector; people who are in 'a different state of consciousness' are 'not welcome'. The latter is strictly applied on trips to away matches—ackpacks can be searched for drugs (*Jutro wracamy na stadiony!* 2015). The atmosphere among Polish fans travelling to a match, at least on the way there, is therefore significantly different from the 'carnival' style of trips by English supporters (Pearson 2012).

It is worth taking a closer look at restrictions for women. In some cases, the ban on women's travel to away matches is strictly enforced for security reasons and reasons that have been described as 'aesthetic':

> For example, when we were at Legia we were gassed [by the police, RK] (…); I wouldn't like to see my woman being gassed or beaten. Sometimes it's like that, it happens. (…) Everyone knows how a lad behaves on the train and I wouldn't like my woman to see what it looks like. You go on the sea [the distance between Zabrze and the seaside is about 600 km, RK] for so many hours and you can't go to the toilet because it's impossible to get there. Well, sorry, but that's the truth. Well, let's not hide that; that's what it looks like when a thousand lads go somewhere. [Górnik Zabrze_supporter]

Women are not eligible to travel (or their number is very limited) in special circumstances, for example when the number of tickets is limited or the level of risk is high. One female fan mentions:

> Well, it's always been … a thing for guys, yes. Trips are for guys. Well, it's because a girl cannot defend the colours [flags, scarves in club colours, RK], for example, right? There are trips that are only for guys. Because … because there are some rules, you know. But there are rules in every envi-

> ronment, so I don't think that if someone tells me that only the guys are going I feel very indignant because I'm also a fan. It means I can't go, right? Well, if someone makes such a decision there is a good reason for that. [Śląsk Wrocław_Female supporter]

The rule that prevents women from travelling to away matches also exists among the supporters of GKS Katowice, which has the most recognizable group of female fans currently operating, called The Female Elite'64. A representatives of this group says:

> We are often asked whether we feel discriminated against by this rule. At first, all of us probably took it that way. Now we know that it's for our security, but also due to our behaviour. We should support GKS with all our strength during the away match. But the thing is that many women who went on such trips did something that they found much more interesting. Without going into details, their behaviour often had very little to do with the reason why we travelled across Poland. [GKS Katowice_Female Supporter]

Just as in the case of men, being a fan can be an important dimension of identity for women and can play the same role in their lives. The problem concerns not so much 'fanaticism' or 'passion', but some specific barriers that women experience. Restrictive rules, which derive from the hooligan world, are designed primarily with the male part of fandom culture in mind. 'Hardcore fandom' is the bastion of the traditional masculine world, based on physical strength, the 'fist' principle and 'black and white' social order. This is another aspect of the 'mechanical' community of fans. In many cases, women are forced to prove that they can act in accordance with the 'authentic' modes of conduct which are opposed to all 'unmanly' patterns of behaviour. Stacey Pope (2017) describes different ways in which female fans are supposed to deal with these demands.

Away games have a particular status: they are, in a way, an 'expedition into the unknown'—is not a match in a local stadium in one's own city. Although, as a result of police supervision, the level of risk and threat from hostile supporters is considerably lower today than in the past, such

trips are still a ritual with a high level of significance. Fans keep a count of their away trips and those with the highest record are treated with respect. Everyone talks about them, asks them about 'old times', and wants them to tell stories and anecdotes about their 'adventures'. This creates a unique aura around older supporters and the 'legendary' era, and provides the basis for fandom mythology. Such supporters are—naturally—a bit older, they have a different sense of proportion, and—mostly—no longer engage in hooligan activity. However, they command respect, a bit like 'mafia legends'—they no longer decide about the fan movement, but everyone knows who they are and how much they mean to it.

The importance of away matches is also stressed by a special 'rite of passage', like the one that the author experienced himself (ethnographic note):

> Each novice leaned against the side of the coach facing it. Those who had been on more trips (at least five) hit them with their belts. The expected reply was 'Lechia!' shouted out loud. I joined those standing and got hit really hard (my buttocks were bruised). When I'd been through it one of the fans said to me: 'Respect, you've admitted it's your first time'; it also commanded respect among other people on the coach. It needs to be noted that I was a newcomer, I didn't know anyone and I was a bit older than most of them. One of the guys clapped me on the shoulder saying 'you've been through a lot today'. No doubt the fact of my initiation was acknowledged and the fans recognized me as one of 'their own'.

It should be noted that trips to away matches are more time-consuming and financially demanding than attending home games. For example, in the case of Lechia Gdańsk fans they involve long distances (except the local derby of the Tri-City, a metropolitan area in the north of Poland, against Arka Gdynia)—even the shortest trips (2018/2019 season) range from 250 to 350 kilometres one way (Wisła Płock, 250 km; Lech Poznań, 300 km; Legia Warsaw and Pogoń Szczecin, 350 km). Most of them, however, are much longer, as a considerable number of Ekstraklasa clubs are in the south of Poland; for example, a trip to Cracow or Upper Silesia is 600 kilometres one way. One of the trips to Lubin (Zagłębie football

club, 450 km one way) took almost 24 hours: it started at 8 am and finished the next day. Therefore, those who have professional or family responsibilities may find it difficult or impossible to join. The quotation below comes from observation notes (from a trip to Szczecin) which describe the social structure of away supporters:

> Most supporters are generally about the same age; visible domination of male supporters. Three women on my coach; on other coaches it's the same—only a few women; they are young (high school, maybe students); two ladies in their thirties. The women wear club outfits—t-shirts; only one (older) wears 'ordinary' clothes (mostly grey). Most men are young people, middle school, high school, students (behind me two students from the Technical University). This is very visible—they are mostly very young people. There are a few older people, some of them even in their sixties; only a handful of them on each coach. The 'decision-makers' and 'elders' travel on the first coach. There are a lot of club and fan emblems; many t-shirts with the motto 'The Rulers of the North' (*Władcy Północy*, an important slogan for Lechia fans in the context of rivalry with Arka Gdynia), and t-shirts of various local fan clubs (also from towns around Gdańsk); many patriotic t-shirts. Only a few people dressed in ordinary clothes. Young age of most travellers means that there are not many people who—at first glance—could be considered 'tough guys' (however, it's hard to say, maybe some of them train martial arts). As it turns out later, most hooligans travel on other coaches.
>
> I sit next to a fan in his forties from a town about 90 kilometres away from Gdańsk. He works every day of the week, so he takes time off for his trips. He has his rituals. On the trip to Szczecin he drinks two beers, but he says he never drinks on the way back, because he goes back home by car. He says that he once drank more and regretted it. He says that a trip is a sacred occasion. He always takes more or less the same seat in the first rows on the coach, and takes part in all activities. He says that if somebody who sits next to you gets up to some mischief, you can also be punished just because you're sitting next to him.

The journey to Szczecin took 18 hours in all, most of it spent travelling on the coach. It is no great surprise, then, that the most important rituals and activities take place on the way. Below is a brief description of such practices:

On the way to the match, consumption of stimulants is the main activity. Fans sing every now and then and shout from time to time. You can smell weed; people drink beer in large quantities; they also drink stronger alcohols, but much less than beer. Lots of cans are thrown out at stops, sometimes under our coach, so that no one (the police?) can see them. There are various consequences of drinking alcohol—at the first stop one of the fans vomits; physiological needs (urinating) are a very common problem. Stops are not very frequent, so the longer we are on the road, the more fans demand a stop. Sometimes, the problem is sorted out using plastic bottles; they are thrown away at car parks.

Generally, the coach is not very loud, everyone can take a nap. The journey passes quite lazily. At longer stops, people disperse; McDonald's is besieged. A lot of people hang around the coach. The police stand by; several officers keep an eye on the bar and the petrol station. Because there are lots of fans, they only allow four people in at a time. They want to prevent them from mass-scale shoplifting (called 'a special promotion' in fans' jargon). However, the amount of alcohol needs to be under control because people who get too drunk risk being turned away at the gate and missing the match. The match is the time of emotional culmination, and at the same time the shortest stage of the whole trip. You need to pace yourself on such long trips so that the moment will not escape your attention. The return journey is mainly a matter of counting down kilometres. As one of the supporters mentions: 'Once we pass Koszalin (a city between Szczecin and Gdańsk) time will fly'. Some people keep drinking, but the atmosphere of waiting for something special is not there anymore.

As can be seen, there are a number of factors which make an away trip a big challenge that not everyone can endure: a long journey, the need to support the team despite tiredness, tense atmosphere stemming both from the presence of the police and the fact of going to 'enemy' territory, and, last but not least, alcohol. In addition, as mentioned above, some groups have their restrictions for women and very young supporters, which is a kind of institutionally established pressure to get the best 'quality' in terms of human resources, and also makes away matches even more elite. However, this also means that the number of supporters who travel across Poland is quite low. Many clubs, even those with the biggest fan base, do not have a representation of supporters which would reflect their

potential. An additional problem is restrictions imposed by the police, local authorities and the clubs. All these factors mean that away trips demand more and more sacrifice from many groups. A report by Legia fans from their trip to Białystok shows what an away trip can look like (this is a subjective account; the context is also important—Legia fans had got hold of many important flags of Jagiellonia supporters a few years before; more information on this is provided in the chapter devoted to ultras activity):

> We are very well aware of the 'inventions' of Jagiellonia authorities, so we arrived at the destination with a safe—as it seemed—time margin. Our special train left Warsaw at 13:15, over seven hours before the match. (…) We arrived a few minutes after 4 pm. As the match started at 20:30, it seemed that the whole group would take their seats in the away fans sector without any problems. (…) Our group of over 700 people entered the stadium for 5 hours (!). Each person had to be marked on the list and then those who were selected were breathalysed. After that everyone was sent to a special tent which had only three security check stands. They had to take off their jackets, sweatshirts, shoes and socks. If the guards did not find anything, they moved on to their favourite activity, that is, 'touching the balls'.
>
> It should be stressed that despite provocations from security guards and the fact that letting us in took a really long time, there was no incident there. At the start of the match, over four hours after the start of the check at the gate, there were just over 500 people from Warsaw in the stands. (…) During the match, the entry procedure was 'improved' even more: the Białystok services closed two out of three security check stands and there was only one person doing the job. Of course, this affected capacity. Eventually, about 130 people did not see the match even though they had tickets..
>
> The entry to the stadium was an absolute record (…), but it turned out that also the exit would not be without problems. Security guards prepared a lane. After some time the gates leading to the car park were only slightly opened and the whole visiting group was let through one by one. Each person was recorded, as if the recordings made at the entrance were not enough. The selectors looked for some special features on the fans' black jackets. A dozen or so people were selected for more detailed checks, but no

> one was detained. (…) We arrived back in Warsaw at 3 o'clock in the morning. [*Jagiellonia*… 2018]

Regardless whether the report of Legia supporters is exaggerated or not, the fact is that many supporters find travelling to away matches increasingly onerous. It seems that in future there will be fewer experienced fans with a record of over 100 trips, also because many of them are cancelled or hindered.

The Monopolization of Status

Norbert Elias concludes that 'the principal forces driving social processes include tensions and conflicts in connection with the *monopolization*, by one group or, on occasions, by two rival groups, of means for satisfying the social needs of other groups—that is, of means of power' (2009: 6). This can also be observed in the case of the fan movement, with its tensions and conflicts stemming from the desire to monopolize the definition of the situation. One such example is a conflict which became apparent in the context of the Supporters United programme (involving cooperation of the Polish Football Association, Polish Ministry of Sport and Tourism and fans from local clubs, described in detail in the last chapter of this book). During a discussion on the www.kibice.net portal (one of the most important sports fan forums in Poland), there was a clash of opinions criticizing and supporting the scheme. The tendency to preserve the 'authentic' approach to what supporting should and should not be seems to be at the core of the dispute. One of the participants is very blunt in his assessment of the situation (all comments collected in January 2019):

> Smart-asses from the government employed some guys who helped for free as volunteers at Euro 2012. Now they gave them contracts and they pay them money. In return, they are supposed to link supporters' associations with this funny project and thanks to their money they will start to install their own people in the associations so that they can fully control the fan movement. And then they will make the league look the same as the

> national team matches, a picnic with the audience completely subordinated to the Football Association and the government. [http://www.kibice.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=30120, accessed 23.05.2020]

These words confirm the importance of fan antagonisms towards external factors, whereby almost any attempt at cooperation provokes opposition and criticism. Another supporter puts this as follows: 'This project publicly exposes the crews that decide to sell their ultras ideals' [http://www.kibice.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=30120, accessed 23.05.2020]. In response, a supporter cooperating with the Supporters United centre in Wrocław writes:

> People working in Supporters United are not pen-pushers; they are normal, active fans often with a great record in the movement. Supporters United itself is an opportunity, a chance to develop, and I think it would be foolish not to take advantage of the resources that can enable you to work with the kids, organize two or three tournaments more, release a few publications and do grass-roots work in fan clubs. There is nothing there that would contradict fan ideals. There is real and positive work and can I see the effects personally. [Wrocław_Supporters United]

In the context of the Supporters United programme, there are also voices referring to 'modernity', as in Kielce, where the coordinator of the local Supporters United centre mentions the 'anti-modern' group among fans: 'When it comes to the group which is not pro-modern, who have their own views and principles, it seems to me that it will not be so negatively perceived'. In another example, a Legia Warsaw fan uses the term 'modern ultras' in the context of Supporters United (Legia fans do not participate in the programme): 'Is taking money from public funds a pure form of modern ultras?' [Legia Warsaw_supporter].

Discussions on the Internet indicate that conflicts within the fan environment are one of the key forces which have an impact on the reconstruction of the world of fans. The desire for domination over the opponent stems from the desire to monopolize status and power within the fan community. Until a few years ago, a popular ranking called 'The Hooligans League' (with scores published in underground zines) decided

on the standing of crews. These were mainly groups of supporters of large clubs; for obvious reasons, they had more members and could select stronger fighters. The ranking has ceased to be relevant in recent years following a decrease in the number of fights. As a result of police surveillance, hooligans are not keen on public interest or esteem. Today, the standing of particular crews depends on the results of particular fights and opinions posted on Internet forums. It is much more common for fans to compete—most of all, openly—by performing their choreographies (see the chapter on ultras).

Antagonisms and oppositions have a direct impact on the supporters' culture (Kossakowski 2015). This means that there is a pattern whereby forming an opposition by separating one world from the 'Other' functions as a primary mechanism of defining the identity of the fan movement in Poland. The following observations made by Zygmunt Bauman perfectly describe the world of fandom: 'Any "we-group" needs its own "them" as an indispensable complement and self-defining device. (…) unusual care must be taken to guard the purity of the group and the clarity of its frontiers. The totality of the group praxis is indeed congested around the "we-they" frontier line' (Bauman 1999: 103, 120). Richard Giulianotti (1999), in turn, observes that identity in football involves two dimensions: 'semantic' and 'syntactic'. In the first dimension, individuals and groups define themselves by answering the question 'who am I/are we'. In contrast, the second aspect involves the answer to another key question: 'who am I not/are we not'. The semantic identity is based on self-definition and self-affirmation, while the syntactic one relies on external oppositions. Giulianotti states that the latter dimension is the dominant one in the process of identity-formation in the world of football. In the case of the Polish fan community, the following statement is also true: 'the role of the rules of exclusion is crucial, indeed fundamental, pre-conditioning applicability of all other rules' (Bauman 1999: 99). So where do the axes of 'exclusion', 'opposition' and conflict in fandom culture intersect?

One of the basic dimensions of the opposition identity of Polish fans is radical 'anti-leftism' (as a political and moral system)—there is currently no group of fans that would identify with leftist (or even liberal) ideas. In addition, owing to the strong influence of hooligan culture (and

prison culture as well; see the next chapter) on the fan movement, the actions and attitudes of the fans are shaped by the hatred of the police, perceived as part of the 'hostile' system. The 'anti-system' or 'anti-establishment' attitude also involves hostility towards the media, which critically (but more or less objectively) describe the world of football fans. The causes and consequences of political radicalism and hostility towards the system are thoroughly described in one of the next chapters.

It is worth noting that Polish fans do not express very hostile attitudes towards the phenomenon of commercialization of football. The slogan 'Against Modern Football' has not become particularly strong in the Polish context. This does not mean that there have not been any fan protests over changes in club ownership or 'violation' of club identity—the cases of Zawisza Bydgoszcz and Legia Warsaw (see Chwedoruk 2015; Kossakowski and Bieszke 2017) indicate that Polish fans are familiar with the strategy of boycott and resistance. However, 'resistant identity' (see Castells 1997) in the sense of hostility towards commercial changes in football did not emerge; unlike in England, in Poland there have not been any protests over such issues as ticket prices. Although Legia Warsaw supporters have prepared some spectacular choreographies against UEFA (one of them featured the slogan 'Because football does not matter, money does'), they have been related to issues concerning only the club from Warsaw (fines imposed by UEFA for the misbehaviour of fans). Polish football has not yet experienced such intense modernization as, for example, the English Premier League, so there is no significant reason to oppose commercialization. Moreover, some fans have a positive attitude towards the process: 'I have repeated this many times, it's a very trendy word, this "commercialization" is a very strong word, very trendy. You have to go in this direction; you can't do anything without money anymore' [Górnik Zabrze_Supporters Association].

The most important opposition for every fan is probably dislike/hatred/hostility (the emotional spectrum is very wide here) of/towards the fans of opposite teams, especially local rivals. Hostility towards some clubs is coupled with friendship and arrangements with the supporters of others. Although sometimes fans of antagonized clubs are able to march arm in arm without mutual violence, such situations are extraordinary and often result from external factors. The complex structure of relations

between supporters and their affiliations certainly requires a broader discussion.

'Deals', 'Alliances' and Old Enemies: The Roots and Structure Of Relations Between Fans

The catalogue of possible relations between fans of different clubs includes five main types:

1. 'Sticker Knife' (*kosa*) between 'Old Enemies';
2. 'Neutrality';
3. 'Deal' (*układ*);
4. 'Alliance' (*zgoda*); and
5. 'Suspended Animosity' (in most cases, owing to exceptional circumstances).

Each local group generates its own mechanisms for the coordination and integration of its own members. However, willingly or unwillingly, all groups must also react to external factors. As a consequence, fan figurations undergo internal integration, and at the same time develop hostility or friendship in relation to other groups. The Polish fan environment is very antagonistically divided, and the lines of division are both local (tensions between fans in one city, e.g. Wisła and Cracovia in Cracow) and regional (Upper Silesia, where the interests of many fan groups are at stake, and the Tri-City area), as well as nationwide (e.g. antipathy of many clubs towards Legia Warsaw).

Alliances and Deals

Inter-club integration can take various forms, as evidenced by the entity called the 'triad', associating the supporters of Arka Gdynia, Cracovia Cracow and Lech Poznań, and by a complex system of 'alliances' (Pol. sing. *Zgoda*, pl. *zgody*), usually concluded between fans of two clubs. Sometimes the supporters of one club are allied with two different clubs

that do not get along with each other; for example Śląsk Wrocław is allied with Lechia Gdańsk and Motor Lublin, which are not on friendly terms.

Until 2016, there was also one more coalition—the supporters of Lechia Gdańsk, Śląsk Wrocław and Wisła Kraków. The two triads associated the top of the fan world in Poland, and no individual groups (even such renowned ones as fans from Ruch Chorzów or Legia Warsaw) were able to compete with them in terms of hooligan activity. However, just before the European Championships in France (2016), the hooligans of Wisła Kraków (from the Sharks group, which dominates the Wisła fan movement in general) announced a 'deal' with the Ruch Chorzów hooligan crew called Psycho Fans. In reaction, the partners of Wisła in the coalition, Lechia and Śląsk, decided to break off the long-established association (Ruch fans are enemies of the fans of both clubs). It is worth noting that in this case friendly relations have a very long history: friendship between Wisła and Lechia goes back to 1978, and their alliance, which was broken in 2016, was 'officially' concluded in 1994. The alliance between Śląsk and Lechia, in turn, is considered one of the longest-lasting friendships between football supporters in Poland—it has continued for over three decades. These kinds of relations, then, go far beyond the context of supporting—they concern intergenerational, long-term friendships, sometimes born in unusual circumstances:

> I'll be honest with you … I did my army service there a long time ago. I did this and that and I got locked up there by the army for a good few years. I did my time with some guys from Wrocław … They were good guys. And then some people asked me 'Let's go there, we'll make an alliance with them'. So we went there and arranged it. It was in 1984. [Lechia Gdańsk_supporter]

It is worth noting that the starting point for an 'alliance' is a 'deal', a looser form of association, which mostly involves cooperation between hooligans or coordination of support at the matches of the national team. For example, in 1999 there were two 'deals': the Poznań deal (named after a meeting in Poznań; fans with no friendly relations with Lech were also engaged) and the Warsaw deal (in this case, only those invited by Legia Warsaw fans). Both of them concerned support during national team

matches and were antagonistic towards each other, which resulted in their confrontation during the Poland vs Sweden match (31 March 1999). A 'deal' can therefore be seen as instrumental in nature, and since it is most often made between hermetic hooligan groups, it can be assumed that in many cases it also involves criminal interests 'beyond divides'.

By contrast, 'alliances' often have a long history. For example, one between the supporters of BKS Stal Bielsko-Biała (Third League) and Zagłębie Sosnowiec has been in place since 1982. It was established thanks to the then leader of BKS, who went to Sosnowiec, where 'he received a friendly welcome from local hooligans, which, of course, involved drinking lots of wine in a park. (…) Of course, both groups had been strongly connected by their hatred of the *Hanys* [residents of the region of Upper Silesia, which has such clubs as Ruch Chorzów and Górnik, RK] and, geographically speaking, it has been a perfect solution for them to this day' (*BKS Stal*… 2017: 12).

'Alliances' are often concluded just because one group of fans helps another to support their team during a match. This was one key factor in the case of GKS Tychy fans: their companions from ŁKS Łódź supported them during the match against Widzew Łódź (the local rival of ŁKS) in 1995, which formed a bond of friendship between the two groups (see GKS Tychy Story 2017: 44). In his two-volume diary (Ruban 2014, 2015), one of the supporters of ŁKS mentions that almost every trip of a group of ŁKS fans to the south of Poland (where Tychy is located) meant paying a visit to GKS people, and that such visits had more to do with drinking together than football.

There are a number of reasons for concluding 'alliances' and 'deals', as well as for their dissolution. For example, a columnist of the *To My Kibice!* magazine (Przytomny 2016: 21) states that the deal between Wisła Cracow and Ruch Chorzów hooligans was motivated by such factors as 'business' that both groups are engaged in (mainly drug trafficking) and the search for allies in the nearest region by Wisła—their former coalition members from Lechia Gdańsk were 600 kilometres away, and the distance between Cracow and Chorzów is only 90 kilometres, which makes it much easier to mobilize support in case of a sudden hooligan action. Suffice it to say that a few weeks after the old alliance between Wisła,

Lechia and Śląsk was over, the new hooligan coalition (Wisła and Ruch) attacked, among others, Lechia and Śląsk supporters at the European Championships in France (2016). This came as an unprecedented breach of the non-aggression pact concerning national team matches, observed since 2004. Former partners from Gdańsk and Wrocław made blunt comments concerning the end of long years of friendship. For example, Śląsk fans displayed a choreography with the meaningful slogan: 'Don't make people refuse to shake hands with you' (*Nie dopuśćcie do tego, aby ludzie uznali was za niegodnych podania ręki*) at the match with Wisła. The use of words such as 'honour', 'fidelity' and 'loyalty' when talking about the split-up indicates that the long-term alliance had a personal dimension for many fans. For example, supporters of Lechia Gdańsk repeatedly stressed in the interviews that they found the situation difficult—they have many friends in Cracow, and matches between the two teams have always been a social occasion. At the moment, however, most of these relations have to be limited to the private sphere and should not be openly displayed.

In some cases the end of 'alliances' and 'deals' is much less spectacular—some of them die their own death due to a lack of contact (especially in the case of large distances between cities), generational change (younger fans do not cultivate tradition) or disagreement between the parties involved (e.g. the alliance between BKS Stal Bielsko-Biała and Legia Warsaw has been 'suspended' until further notice due to the fact that—as unofficial information suggests—Legia hooligans left BKS on their own during the fight against Spartak Moscow crew). The year 2013 saw the end of the twenty-year-long alliance between the supporters of Legia Warsaw and Pogoń Szczecin. The reason was the aversion which Pogoń supporters felt towards Zagłębie Sosnowiec fans, who are an important coalition partner for Legia. Another factor at play was the weak 'form' of Pogoń hooligans (they are not recognized as important rivals in the eyes of most crews). The cup of bitterness was filled in Rome, where Legia played a match against Lazio in the Europa League. There was a scandal between the fans of Pogoń and Zagłębie (both groups supported Legia).

Pogoń fans had a grudge against Legia supporters, who were indifferent to the attack of Zagłębie people on Pogoń crew and did not help them.

The complexity of relations between supporters' groups, their nature which is sometimes not simple to grasp, and the fact that 'deals' and 'alliances' are made and broken almost every day mean that the fan culture in Poland can be considered a fluid field which is based on interdependencies. It is a domain where hierarchies and levels of integration are in a state of constant flux.

Neutrality

Sometimes there is neither an 'alliance' in place nor animosity between the fans of rival teams. This state is referred to as 'neutrality': although the groups are not supportive towards each other, they have mutual respect and behave neutrally. In the environment of Polish supporters this attitude occurs most of all in cases where there are no conflicts or even no previous contacts. 'Neutrality' simply stems from indifference and lack of reasons for animosity. Very often 'neutrality' or 'indifference' is apparent in the attitude of a stronger group towards one with a lower potential. For example, such rivals are not insulted in match chants, because they are not considered 'worthy' opponents. Sometimes, a neutral attitude is applied to 'friends of our friends'—it is assumed that one should behave with self-restraint. 'Neutrality' also translates into small gestures of help. It is much easier then to get help in arranging match tickets. A classic example concerns situations when away supporters are officially banned from travelling by the Football Association or the local council. In such cases fans of the host team help them to buy tickets for neutral sectors. It is important to stress that similar help can also be provided for 'enemies', especially when this makes it possible to pull a prank on the police or football officials.

Neutrality can, of course, turn into hostility, as evidenced by the incident during a match between Zawisza Bydgoszcz and Jagiellonia Białystok (2013, Polish Ekstraklasa). One of the fan magazines sums it up as follows:

> Zawisza and Jagiellonia fans (…) had not been on hostile terms. This could be seen more as neutral contacts (…). However, it quickly turned out that neutrality is one thing, and spontaneity is the other. Around the 15th minute of the match (…) one of the away supporters jumped over the low fence, broke the flag of Zawisza (…) and ran with it towards his sector. (…) Several people chased him and recovered the flag; the Jagiellonia daredevil suffered a bit in the encounter. (…) This event meant that the peace in the stands and cheering own teams were over, and that pressure greatly increased. (…) After the match Zawisza fans chased the visitors who had arrived to the match in their cars. They managed to beat several people. (*Zawisza Bydgoszcz*… 2013: 10–12)

This example shows that 'neutrality' can be over when certain—unwritten—rules are broken. Jagiellonia supporters behaved 'dishonestly': they decided to seize the flag of home team supporters despite the fact that they had received a 'hospitable' welcome (e.g. home supporters tried to get cheaper tickets for them). This indicates that the border between sympathy, neutrality and hostility in the world of supporters can be easily crossed. Hostility, in turn, sometimes has drastic consequences.

Sticker Knife

The structure of relations between supporters' groups is subject to dynamic changes. In some cases old friends turn into enemies; in others hatred between some fans has been there 'from time immemorial'. Hostility is definitely most intense at the local level—in derby cities, particularly in local neighbourhoods—which is quite understandable: supporters try to show their superiority over the local rival and have plenty of opportunities for confrontation. There are cases in which dramatic events from the past set the local fan scene as it is today. For example, unfriendly relations between Lechia Gdańsk and Arka Gdynia fan circles turned into (most probably permanent) hatred when an Arka supporter was killed by a Lechia fan. The perpetrator describes the incident as follows:

> On that fatal day we drank alcohol. About fifty metres from us, two guys started shouting: 'Arka!', 'Arka!'. They were provoked by a Lechia scarf my friend wore on his neck and my t-shirt in club colours. A moment later, they changed their repertoire and began shouting 'Lechia dicks!'. I moved to silence them. There was a bit of a fight. Four more guys came out from behind a hill when they heard the shouts. All of them were about ten years older than me. I was less than seventeen at the time. I panicked, I pulled out a knife. I thought they would get scared, but they got furious when they saw it. Then I thought I wanted to get out of this in one piece. They felt strong, they were in a group. One of them jumped on me. It was the last thing he did in his life. (*DUFO* 2005)

As an older Arka fan recalls, there was no chance for 'peace' after that:

Researcher: Does it mean that such incidents make any peaceful action impossible?
Arka Gdynia Supporter: Absolutely. It's irreversible. It's gone and that's it. I just don't see it.

In 2005, a local newspaper published opinions of Lechia fans concerning their animosity towards the local rival. The reasons they mention for hostile attitudes are very different:

[Supporter 1]: I once asked the guys why Lechia hates Arka and Arka hates Lechia, why they don't like each other. And all of them said: 'Because it's a tradition'. No one was really able to explain it.
[Supporter 2]: And why does a Palestinian not like a Jew, and vice versa?
[Supporter 3]: Where did the war between Arka and Lechia's come from? It's a tradition. And it doesn't matter if it was our generation or earlier generations that started it. Gdańsk is simply a big city, and Gdynia is smaller. People with complexes are trying to be aggressive towards us. We are better and they envy us. And that's it. (*Mówią kibice Lechii…* 2005)

Another supporter of Arka stresses the importance of a general rivalry between the two cities:

> This rivalry goes on not only among football fans, but also in everyday life. Politicians compete, ordinary people, Gdynia and Gdańsk residents, they also compete. They boast that nightlife and parties are better here and worse out there, or, I don't know, there are potholes in the streets there, and things like that. There is such competition when you look at any aspect of life. Of course, the intensity is different. [Arka Gdynia_supporter]

While Gdańsk is the capital of a province, the larger and much older city of Gdynia is rapidly developing and has its own aspirations. Both local clubs competed in the same division (Ekstraklasa) in the 2018/2019 season, which intensified rivalry and hostility between their supporters, including attacks on local enemies. In 2016, before a derby match between Arka and Lechia, hooligans from Gdynia attacked cars driven by Lechia and Śląsk fans (allied with Lechia). In February 2015, 100 Lechia hooligans got on a city train full of Arka supporters; five people were injured in the fight that ensued and some carriages were damaged. Both groups track their opponents' graffiti in order to destroy it and paint it over with their own.

The death of an Arka supporter is not the only such case in the history of fan competition in Poland. In the highly urbanized region of Upper Silesia, with its many cities bordering one another, fan rivalry seems obvious. When two supporters of Ruch Chorzów lost their lives at the hands of Górnik Zabrze fans, the consequences were irreversible:

> After those two incidents, not only did mutual hatred increase to an unprecedented level, but also an unprecedented decision took place. The Blues [the name of Ruch Chorzów fans, derived from the colours of the club, RK] announced they would not attend, as an organized group of supporters, derby matches in Zabrze. (…) Ruch fanatics stress that they do not want to have any peaceful contact with *Żabole* [a nickname of fans from Zabrze, RK] whatsoever. (*Ruch Chorzów Story* 2017: 49)

The group of Ruch hooligans called Psycho Fans went a step further: they announced that they would no longer respect the code of conduct in the fights against their local rivals:

> We also declare that we are in favour of the spirit of sport in encounters with other crews as before [i.e. fights without the use of dangerous objects, RK]. However, in view of the current situation in Upper Silesia we inform—out of respect to other teams—that all those who in any circumstances support our enemies GKS [a club from Katowice, allied with Górnik Zabrze, RK] and KSG [Górnik Zabrze, RK] will be treated just like them … both in Upper Silesia and beyond. (*Oświadczenie Psycho Fans* 2016)

Upper Silesia is a specific region in that it was privileged for decades owing to its rich coal deposits, and thousands of people were employed in the mining industry (particularly in the communist era). Although the times of hegemony of heavy industry and mining in the Polish economy are long gone, most clubs that were established thanks to coal mines (and sponsored by them) still operate, and two of them played in Ekstraklasa in the 2018/2019 season (Górnik and Piast Gliwice). A supporter of Górnik Zabrze talks about the neighbourhood of specific clubs:

> We have three other clubs not very far from where we are, Polonia Bytom [another renowned club, two-time Polish league champion, RK], Piast Gliwice and Ruch Chorzów.

The interviewee adds that in view of the football geography of the region, Górnik fans living in other cities of Upper Silesia sometimes choose to take a roundabout route to the stadium to avoid travelling across Chorzów or Bytom, where they may be attacked by hostile hooligan crews. The fan and hooligan network in the region is highly complex, because even small towns have fan clubs of big clubs, which means that on almost every housing estate fans have to watch out for 'the enemy'. A large number of hooligan groups and very frequent incidents can—to some extent—also stem from the social and economic problems of the region. As mentioned in the next chapter (devoted to hooligans), the

collapse of the mining industry left a vacuum in which many young people look for their place and a sense of belonging in strong groups.

Real hatred also prevails in cities where there are two clubs with strong groups of supporters. This is the case, for example, in Łódź (ŁKS and Widzew) and Kraków (Cracovia and Wisła). In the latter city, hatred is so fierce that it affects the behaviour of school-age children. Drastic situations occur even at schools:

> This is how it looks in Cracow; there is such hatred. It starts already in primary school: when someone says they support Wisła, and this is a district ruled by Cracovia, this person gets beaten to get Wisła out of his head. In high school, older guys from the area come round and keep an eye on things; it's also important because you have to look after your people. These are ridiculous situations: someone is sixteen and a twenty-year-old guy comes round and kicks the shit out of him. That's what it looks like. [Cracovia Cracow_supporter]

Such hatred affects young children and they begin to develop their 'antagonistic' identity from choosing the colours of their school kits, as can be seen in a comment made by a Miedź Legnica supporter:

> There was this mother who bought an orange pencil case for her son and the boy didn't want to go to school. The parents didn't know what was going on; his school bag was already packed. You know, if something is pink, people often say it's for girls. But here this thing was orange and it's Zagłębie club colour. It really comes to such situations. [Legnica_NGO]

Zagłębie is a club from Lubin, 23 kilometres away from Legnica (the home city of Miedź football club). Both clubs play in the same division (Ekstraklasa), and they are derby rivals. Supporters of both clubs share a mutual aversion, which—as can be seen—also works at the level of socialization.

Antagonism does not mean, however, that 'sticker knife' relations always mean physical and verbal violence. Sometimes, aversion to rivals can be turned into a joke, for example in the case of a family member:

> My cousin, and we're very close, is a *Widzewiak* [a fan of Widzew Łódź, RK]. It's my greatest failure in life that I haven't fixed it. Well, my godfather, that's his father, unfortunately brought him up in this other 'faith'. [ŁKS Łódź_supporter]

Sometimes a particular supporter can separate fan issues from those related to ordinary human behaviour: 'I hate Widzew and I wish them the worst, but there are people on the other side of the barricade that I respect. In addition, in various situations in life (army, emigration, work) I met a few good guys from Widzew crew. As I realized many times, people never know where selfless help may come from, not necessarily in matters related to football. Therefore, one must be able to separate certain things' (Ruban 2014: 7).

Suspended Animosity

However, in certain situations fans rise above their divisions, particularly in the case of conflicts with the authorities or the police, or when it comes to their commitment to commonly shared values (see Kossakowski and Bieszke 2017). Such was the case of support for a Legia Warsaw fan who was held in custody for three years (Dobrowolski and Kowalski 2016). Many groups which are hostile to the Warsaw team showed their solidarity with the detainee by displaying banners saying 'Set Maciek Free' in the stadiums (*Uwolnić Maćka*; Maciek is the name of the fan). When he was released, he decided to personally thank the 'enemies' from Lech during their match against Legia (October 2015, report by a Lech supporter): '(…) just before the match there was an important and, in a sense, a touching moment: Maciek came over to our sector. (…) In many interviews Maciek stressed that he was especially moved by support from us—the hated enemies (…). Maciek decided to thank us for our support by himself, face to face, so he got our megaphone for a minute or so and personally thanked for the support he had received. (…) Maciek, you don't have to thank us; you're welcome. Polish Fans—always together!' (*Legia Warsaw-Lech Poznań* 2015: 14–15). This is an unusual occurrence in such an antagonistic environment as the world of fans. It has to be

stressed, however, that only a moment after this speech both groups went their separate ways to support their clubs and insult the opponent.

Fans sometimes suspend their animosities and cooperate for a common cause—they help one another in fights against the police, who are their mutual 'enemy', and support fans of the opposing team when they are in conflict with the authorities of their club. As will be mentioned in the chapter on hooligans, an important achievement that required rising above divisions was a pact which introduced a ban on dangerous objects in hooligan fights and the principle of truce during national team matches. However, this pact has become a matter of dispute.

One of the most extraordinary moments of 'peace' between fans was the time after the death of Polish Pope John Paul II on 2 April 2005. The Holy Mass organized in Cracovia stadium (4 April) by its fans (the Pope had been a supporter of Cracovia) was a symbol of reconciliation. Every important club from Poland was represented. This was probably the only time when bitter enemies from Wisła and Cracovia stood side by side wearing their scarves and sang religious hymns together. This 'holy peace' was wrongly interpreted by many actors (the Football Association, the media, etc.) as permanent reconciliation. Indeed, a few days later violent incidents in some stadiums showed that peace was no longer possible. Nevertheless, the period right after the Pope's death was an example of (unplanned) suspension of antagonism between fans.

Another notable moment of 'reconciliation' is the annual Independence March. Held on 11 November, which is a national holiday, it is regularly attended by thousands of people, including fans (who mostly represent patriotic attitudes). It is worth quoting an account of the event provided by a Legia Warsaw fan:

> We are marching as Legia fans. I look around and I can see Lech Poznań in balaclavas next to us. In a moment we are joined by Lechia Gdańsk and Wisła Cracow with their faces covered. (…) We were there all together marching arm in arm. There was no aggression even though those were not the most peaceful crews of the fan crowd. (…) We have to remember that for Lech we are the enemy number one. Still, they stood there in their balaclavas next to us and no one even thought of attacking the others. It was a really big thing. (*To My Kibice!*, no. 12/2011, p. 5)

The world of Polish fans can be interpreted as a figuration of constantly changing arrangements, 'alliances', friendships, hostilities, dependencies and functional division. Although based on traditional 'mechanical' types of social bonds, this world is not immune to change. These changes stem from the internal dynamics of the fan world (conflicts, games of interests) on the one hand, and from the necessity of responding to imperatives of the outside world on the other—actions of the police, government and changing legal regulations. These include determinants of what Norbert Elias analysed as part of the process of state-formation (2012). The Polish state, which after 1989 had to rebuild its structures almost from scratch, also undertook regulation of the conduct of fans at the stadiums. This was a factor that influenced their behaviour and the structure of their culture, and was, of course, fundamental to the formation of the collective identity of Polish football supporters.

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3

Professional Fights, Pacts and Ways of Conduct: The Hermetic World of Polish Hooligans

The end of the 1990s brought a gradual change to the character of fan culture and marked the beginning of its 'functional differentiation'. November 1998 saw the first arranged fight planned by two 'crews' (Pol. sing. *ustawka*; pl. *ustawki*), held between the supporters of Lechia Gdańsk and Arka Gdynia. One of the participants, an Arka fan who was sixteen at the time, recalls: 'This guy asked me if I wanted to fight. I said yes. The adrenaline made my legs shake. I had my nose broken and my face was all bruised. On the next day, everyone at school knew what I'd been up to'. A few years before, getting into fights had been part and parcel of fan life, and such encounters were not subject to any planning or arrangement (concerning the site, the time or the number of participants). Meanwhile, the end of the century saw the emerging selection of those who could be valuable fighters. An ŁKS Łódź supporter involved in violent hooligan activity throughout the 1990s mentions the following situation from 2000:

> [one of the leaders of ŁKS fans] told us to choose a group of 25–30 people who would go there by taxis. I wasn't in the group and I wasn't very happy about that, of course. He loudly said to me that only those who trained something were going and the fact that I could only wave some equipment

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> [dangerous objects, RK] about was not really useful. (…) He was right. I didn't train anything, and my typical hooligan experience from the 1990s was slowly becoming useless. That day was bound to come. Let's put it straight: I just wasn't good at it. Besides, I wasn't that young either. (…) Fortunately, organized ultras groups started, and I later found my place there. (Ruban 2015: 373)

Those who 'did not fit' the profile of hooligan groups could find their place in ultras groups or in other spheres of fan activity.

Fists or Weapons? Fighting Rules and the Discourse of Honour

Although it sounds paradoxical (the matter concerns violence against others), a shift of emphasis to arranged fights was an important motive for change in the figuration of fans. A fan from Gdynia shares his reflections, which are interesting in the context of the significance of arranged fights:

> The most important thing in such fights is to not use equipment [weapons and dangerous objects, RK]. We arranged that we wouldn't use it in our fights with Lechia (…). As young boys, we were educated by older fans that fighting with equipment didn't make sense. It can be dangerous and cause some serious problems. (…) Arranged fights were organized just for this—fighting without equipment. The idea was to make the hooligan world a little civilized. (Młodzi chuligani—Arka Gdynia 2017: 73)

As history shows, the issue of using the so-called equipment, that is, weapons or dangerous objects, has become one of the key issues in hooligan discourse.

In the early 2000s, a fan magazines wrote: 'Nowadays, hooligans meet for the popular *ustawka*, where they show their superiority over the rivals, and where there is no risk that something could happen to outsiders. Someone might say that there is a law against it. This is a fact, but I repeat once more, no outsider suffers and no property is damaged' (Artur 2002:

19). The journalist also adds: 'Arranged fights were a way to test oneself. Hooligan crews started thinking how to organize them. By the way, those groups had to specialize in this because it was not a spontaneous brawl somewhere on the streets where you could wave your belt or throw a bottle, but you had to be a warrior, you needed a bit of training. And this is exactly what happened'.

Arranged fights became the subject of a debate in fan circles, including such issues as their 'advantages' and 'disadvantages' (see Malkontent 2002: 11), rules and principles (which should be based on honour and respect for the opponent, Zgred 2002: 31), and practical arrangements (e.g. equal number of participants, their age, a ban on dangerous objects, the so-called technical equipment, the site, etc.). The rules of relationship between fans began to be regulated by an informal code (e.g. the so-called Fan Code), including such points as supporting fans in the fight against the police (even if it concerns fans of hostile clubs), a ban on the use of 'equipment' in the fights, and a ban on mistreatment of the defeated opponent, including robbery. These rules do not form an ultimate list, and many comments on Internet fan forums indicate that they are not always followed. Nevertheless, such supra-local, nationwide ways of regulating behaviour resemble processes observed in the case of formation of larger social entities and states (Norbert Elias describes them as a type of formalization, see Elias 2012). The rules approved by fans are not sanctioned by any 'coercive apparatus' (e.g. state authorities), but work on the principle of ostracization in fan circles: 'dishonourable' and dishonest behaviour, inconsistent with the spirit of principles, is stigmatized by means of rumours and symbolic violence (chants during matches, banners). In 2004, the so-called Poznań Pact was concluded—fans of several dozen clubs met to discuss the rules of 'not using equipment in fights' and the principle of 'truce during the matches of the Polish national team' (in 1995, before the Poland vs England match in Chorzów, a Pogoń Szczecin fan was fatally stabbed by a Cracovia Cracow supporter).

Of course, the 'code' or 'pact' is not formalized in any way—it is a matter of a certain consensus on the principles (most of) which the fan environment perceives as desirable. However, since in this case there are no permanent rules, they should be analysed with a great deal of reflexivity, especially given the fact that there are voices about the 'hooligan turn'

(the 'rebirth' of hooliganism), which increasingly goes hand in hand with the questioning of old pacts and codes:

> [The Pact, RK] still exists, people refer to it. In the case of clubs that aren't very hostile to each other or don't operate in the same region and meet sometimes somewhere away, I think in such cases the pact works, but in derby circumstances—not only in Cracow, but also in Upper Silesia, Łódź, Dębica—there is lots of equipment in fights. (…) I think the way it goes is a bit wrong. Recently, I saw a photo of Ruch Chorzów fans at a fans' tournament [football tournament organized for fans and by fans themselves, RK] and they wore t-shirts with images of crossed machetes or something. Last year—apart from Cracow guys—even when people ran around with equipment they denied it and denounced such 'toys' loud and clear. But now, here I am—wearing a t-shirt that openly promotes this hooligan style…' [Editor_fan magazine]

One exception to the 'pact' was the situation in 2016 involving brawls between Polish fans at the European Championships in France, which was a drastic violation of the rules respected by most fans. These incidents may affect the preservation of 'neutrality' during national team matches.

The fact that the use of 'equipment' in fights is determined by local conditions is apparent in Cracow, where weapons and dangerous objects have always been a 'norm', and the rules of 'honour' and 'respect' for the opponent are limited in scope. A fan of a Cracow club recalls:

> You attack when a lad is on his own, or if there are two of them; the rules don't really matter much. Well, sometimes if we get a guy who doesn't chicken out and admits he's a [club name, RK] fan we respect him. He'll still get the crap beaten out of him but it changes our approach. We take it solo, the strongest one among us against him, but there is no way he can win because we take turns until he's done. Some of them are real suckers; a guy like that will tell you in your face that he isn't a fan at all, or that all he does is spend time with his girlfriend. And if they get you when they are in a group, they put on a tough guy act.

The interviewee points out that attackers target only those who look like 'fanatics'—they can be recognized by their clothes and the signs of their

club affiliation they wear. For example, a parent wearing a scarf who is walking back home from a match with his child will not be attacked. Other rules also apply to women, although there are exceptions:

> Female company doesn't always help. Sometimes you push her aside, but sometimes she can get a slap on the face if she's making problems. Sometimes you can also use a girl. For example, a girl flirts on the Internet with a guy from the opposite side; she sets him up when he comes to the date and we take care of him. One of our guys saw girls from our enemy club on the tram. He wanted to hit them so much that he couldn't stand still, but he didn't. It all depends on a person. [Cracovia Cracow_supporter]

A fan from Cracow mentions that minor cuts and broken bones are a common occurrence. Moreover, the city has had the most fatalities among fans: 'Everyone has equipment on them; knives and machetes are a standard. I even know a guy who has a rubber bullets gun, but he needs to be afraid of something else'. A typical hooligan attack may look like this:

> One time we went to an estate where there were those guys, fifteen of them or something. They had a leader who organized them and they grew stronger. We were fighting guys. One of us approached him, put his machete to his head, and asked 'Shall I cut your head off?'. The guy pissed himself on the spot. The rest of his band disappeared; we wouldn't have had any chance if they'd moved on us. That was a crazy thing to do. There were pictures of how he pissed himself and he was finished after that.
>
> Researcher: Would he really have his head cut off?
>
> Respondent: Probably not. He probably would have got the shit beaten out of him, but that's how it works. [Anonymous respondent]

Interestingly, fans of Cracow clubs seem to respect the 'anti-weapon pact' in the case of fights with supporters from other cities. In addition, although they have 'guerrilla' squads composed of people practising martial arts, they rarely participate in arranged fights. Cracow fans often go to away games in small groups, because they prefer to stay in their city to look after their own areas.

Reading reports which describe confrontations between fans, one can notice a specific discourse indicating the 'internal, environmental pressure' (associated with the awareness of existing rules). During the match between Elana Toruń and Motor Lublin in 2013, there was a fight near the stadium, involving the use of bricks and bottles. It is worth quoting the 'explanations' of both sides (report published in *To My Kibice!* magazine, no. 8/2013, pp. 14–15):

> Those young guys who don't have much of a clue started throwing bricks from behind of our crowd; Motor answered with bottles. Just like Motor, who challenged us to go bare fists with them, our guys who know what this is about tried to get some control over ours throwing things at them, but there was no way they could do it. (…) It's not like it didn't get to the fist fight (we snatched a few flags), but the thing is there were things thrown on both sides (they hadn't been prepared). Sorry to say that, but because of all this mess-up, bricks being thrown and cars damaged, we can't see this action as our victory. (Elana)

> We were ready for a fist thing, but when we saw the hail of stones they threw at us we shouted to them that we wanted to have a fist fight, and that the police were trying to get our guys; but they kept throwing stones, broken planks and bits of metal things. Two guys from Elana tried to get their people to stop throwing things at us, but they couldn't. (Motor)

It is crucial to note that although the situation involved acts of breaking the law, what determined the assessment of the situation by the supporters was not the legal issue but the issue of violation of the 'internal' rules of fandom culture. Is such 'honourable' aggression against an opponent proof of the 'civilizing process' of fan culture? Judged from the perspective of a broader context of social conduct, violent acts would be considered 'uncivilized'. On the other hand, the historical social process shows a slow but distinct change of fan attitudes. While in the 'crazy' 1990s such issues as dangerous 'equipment' were not a subject of concern (one of the respondents recalls: 'We used everything, samurai swords, anything that was at hand; you protected yourself, because you never knew what could happen'), they are certainly considered today. Although the perspective of eliminating such extreme affects as aggression (and

hate) from the fan figuration is very distant, it is crucial to recognize the changes, influenced also by 'external constraints'. Criminal and civil law developed in the process of state formation to protect the social order becomes an important factor of disciplining fans.

> In the old days, you just got a few hits with a baton from the police and they would let you go. Your father might have given you a hiding when you got back home. Today, you're charged with assaulting a police officer, that's a big thing; it's not worth it. Those guys who need more excitement, they keep quiet and they do their thing in the woods. No one jumps over the fence to run across the pitch anymore; there's too much to lose. [Arka Gdynia_supporter]

A glance at the history of Polish fandom in the last several years clearly reveals that the law has become more restrictive and has come to affect an increasing spectrum of behaviour. The development of the state-making process in its legal dimension has an impact on the specialization and functional differentiation in the fan figuration, as it induces solutions which have not yet been taken into account. On the other hand, in some cases supporters who 'lose' fights stress the honourable conduct of their rivals. A note by Olimpia Elbląg fans (Second League) after their confrontation with Stomil Olsztyn hooligans (First League) reads: 'A plus for the action for our rivals. We admit our defeat and we'll see you next time. At this point we should deny all media rumours that some sticks or clubs were used. Stomil fought honourably and didn't use any equipment' (Olimpia Elbląg zaatakowana… 2017).

Hooliganism as a Sport

Even where there is still violence (hooligan fights), there are more rules and 'regulations', which modernize and professionalize this 'deviant' aspect of supporting (the 'parliamentarization' of fighting, as Norbert Elias could say; see Elias and Dunning 1986). Some of the hooligan fights become a kind of 'sports contest', a form of 'quest for excitement' (Elias and Dunning 1986). The MMA Team Tournament is a case in point:

'teams' of supporters from different clubs (e.g. Arka Gdynia, Lech Poznań, ŁKS Łódź, Zagłębie Sosnowiec) fight in a purpose-built cage, follow a set of sports rules and are controlled by a referee; medical care is provided. Launched in Poznań in 2017, the Iron Warriors Team tournament gathers only fan teams. A fan magazine published the following comment on the event: 'Who would have imagined it twenty years ago, when the first hooligan crews were slowly emerging in Poland? Who would have thought that there would be times that hooligans would fight in the ring—rather than use broken wine bottles that they have emptied themselves—and, what's more, earn money doing that?' (Iron Warriors Team 2017: 8). Does this mean that hooligan fights serve as a kind of 'catharsis' for some subculture groups? An interesting interpretation is proposed by a person who is not associated with the fan movement:

> Personally, the way I see it is that from time to time, every several years or every few decades, there is a war and that's it. People need to go somewhere and release their emotions. The nation is purified. (…) And these are young people, and, well, it is good when they go to the gym and let off some steam, isn't it? Do they need yet another source of adrenaline? [Zabrze_City Council]

A specific 'justification' for arranged fights is presented by a person holding a position in a public office in Gdańsk:

> It seems to me that arranged fights are an achievement of the twenty-first century fan movement. I condemn fights with the so-called equipment, some knives, sticks, axes. They mean nothing to me. But arranged fights which have a sports formula… Eighty, a hundred or two hundred determined men are there just to fight in the middle of the forest, a hundred or two hundred kilometres away from the stadium; these fights are a safety valve in the stadiums. They say this: 'We have our holiday here, we have fun; we come here and you watch the game there, you eat popcorn, drink coke, and we'll do our business somewhere else'. This is a very good and practical approach for me. Of course, there are no judges in the woods, but there are certain rules; it's a more spontaneous form of struggle, but there is no one there who would be there by accident. That's a question for an adult person: do you want to fight or not? You drive two hundred kilome-

> tres to fight in the woods and you can get your bones broken, you can get killed. Just like in the boxing ring you can get your bones broken, you can get killed. It can happen, so … I don't see a problem with that.

This statement is, of course, a certain idealization based on the assumption that hooligans can release their aggression and energy in a 'civilized' way, without putting the stadiums and others at risk. In theory, this would involve illegal sports competitions. Robert Van Krieken observes as follows:

> Important as driving forces behind the civilizing process are competition, and the opportunities for advantage offered by being distinctive in the realm of manners and morals. Continuing competition between various social groups has generated both the willingness to submit to the demand of etiquette and the increasing subjection of people's bodies, emotions and desires to stringent controls and ever more demanding forms of self-discipline. Competition has also driven the spread of the civilizing process, first to the higher bourgeois strata, in their attempts to enter court society, and then in turn to the strata below them. (2007: 31)

This observation is useful in the analysis of the fan figuration. Competition is the core activity of fans, especially hooligans. If competition is to be considered credible, it must be based on generally accepted principles which involve both 'manners' and 'morals' (however specifically conceived). As for self-discipline, it is important that today's hooligan crews are composed of individuals who are involved in martial arts (boxing, MMA, etc.). It would not be an exaggeration to conclude that hooligan activity as it is today involves less spontaneity and randomness, and increasingly more calculation and strategy and a training regime. Many hooligans care about healthy nutrition, avoid alcohol and drugs, and work out in gyms. This phenomenon is proof of the evolution of fan culture. As a Śląsk Wrocław supporter comments: 'It's a generational thing; every generation has different priorities, I can say. For example, in the past, fans used to be spontaneous when they travelled, there was a lot of alcohol. Today, it's a kind of sport; they despise alcohol and they don't

respect people who reel around'. The following comment from a fan indicates the context of values, but also notes historical changes:

> I took part in *ustawki* [arranged fights, RK], all of them were honourable. First, Lech [Poznań, RK] counted us, then we counted Lech. When someone screamed 'enough', you always let him go. You don't jump on the guy who's lying; if he's lying and you can see he's had enough, you pull the others away from him. I've been in many fights, no one has ever broken the rules. Now my son fights. He is twenty-one; he is a third-year student. He trains cage fighting, six to seven times a week, just to prepare for an *ustawka*. He doesn't want to be a professional fighter, he just trains for *ustawki*. After graduation he wants to make money by working in his profession. In our times it was different. We did sports; I trained race walking, five kilometres, another guy played rugby, there was judo. We were all more or less athletic, but today everyone trains something. It's a completely different situation. [Lechia Gdańsk_supporter]

> A columnist of the *To My Kibice!* magazine also writes about similar consequences: 'While in the 1990s you could get involved just by chance, you felt quite strong and you could fight with a hooligan guy (he was just crazy, he liked to fight, but he did not necessarily spend all his time in the gym), the circumstances as they are today produce real "killing machines". (…) In a spontaneous brawl, nobody has a chance against the monsters from hooligan crews except the same kind of fighters like them, and this must lead to a certain isolation of the rest of the ultras stands. This makes the natural division into ultras and hooligans a fact. (…) The division has just happened!' (ŁG 2017: 57)

These 'killing machines' follow training regimes; for example, the Wisła Cracow hooligan squad (called Sharks) uses a professional, two-level gym right next to the Wisła stadium. Wisła fans also run the club called Train Martial Arts (Trenuj Sporty Walki), officially opened in 2014; its logo features the image of a shark. The club has such sections as MMA and Muay Thai, and a group called Young Wisła. A note on its website includes the following passage: 'When we started our club, photos presenting the first sessions and the equipment appeared on different fan forums. Many representatives of groups that do not like our club had

to admit—even on the Internet—that they had not seen anything like that, and that they looked at them with respect and admiration' (see: http://trenujsportywalki.com/; accessed 07.05.2019). It is an unprecedented situation that the supporters can hone their hooligan craft openly and in accordance with official regulations (related to sports clubs, accounting procedures, sanitary conditions, etc.).

At this point—without questioning the above statement (or others)—it is necessary to mention the need for analytical reflection concerning the narrative about hooligan fights: they can be idealized by respondents and can be difficult to verify due to the lack of access to this research field. One case in point here is the discourse of 'honour'. For example, Raków Częstochowa fans made the following comment when their flags had been seized in the attack of Ruch Chorzów hooligans: 'Since the time of the Poznań Pact we have firmly stuck to its rules, even though this was not always the case among our opponents. Interestingly, it has always been the top bands who had a problem with respecting the rules' (Piłkarska gwiazdka… 2017: 50). Undoubtedly, there is a constant struggle for 'authenticity' on the one hand and for the monopolization of high position and reputation in the hooligan world on the other; this issue has been described in the ethnographies of hooliganism (Pearson 2015). The desire to improve status sometimes involves seeking excuses after losing a fight:

> We fought against Legia, our group against theirs, bear fists, an honourable fight. And Legia got beaten, right? And then, well, the usual excuses started … that they hadn't prepared properly, that one of their guys had got sick, or that this guy or another wasn't there, and that we would have been defeated if he had… [ŁKS Łódź_Supporter]

It is worth taking a look at how the discourse of building an advantage over the opponent is created. In September 2017, there was a fight between fans of GKS Katowice and Ruch Chorzów. A few hours after the incident, 'statements' from both sides were released on a fan website:

> GKS: Today, it has finally turned out that the Internet and the street are two different things. For the first time from time immemorial they tried to

> take up a challenge in equal numbers (two cars of people on each side). It was supposed to be their best line-up, but still, when a few of them got seriously knocked out the rest tried to bang our spoiler and got hit by the car and completely defeated. This event puts an end to all speculations about who rules in the streets of the city!
>
> Ruch: As for the situation yesterday, our lady neighbours would never write the truth… Pity it was six against fifteen, and that you tried to fuck off in your Citroen (…) before the whole thing even started, trying to get help from your pageboys. We tried to stand our ground and we didn't try to fuck off like you did when the numbers are even. As for the knockouts—only one person from our crew got beaten… Sports greetings and see you next time! (Mysłowicka GieKSa… 2017)

A fan magazine journalist mentions that the importance of reputation is so great that the most 'noble' teams not only avoid confrontation with groups that are equal in size, but increasingly 'hunt' their opponents when they are largely outnumbered. The reason behind this practice is that they want to avoid a defeat. This attitude can also lead to breaking the rules (e.g. the use of equipment). The struggle for 'reputation' is also apparent when it comes to such mundane issues as match reports:

> In Poland, most supporter groups have one 'official' report, which is usually laconic and doesn't include inconvenient facts, and the same report is published everywhere. There is no way you can get a more detailed report for the magazine from these people, and their reports are quite often biased or just conceal the facts. [Editor_fan magazine]

Fan crews (both hooligans and supporters' associations) use the opportunity to create their image, which sometimes resembles a public relations campaign. While in the 1990s the best hooligan teams were described in the ranking called 'The Hooligans League' (published in independent fanzines), today such groups take care of their image on their own. This is certainly proof of the 'professionalization' of the fan figuration, and the only thing that the researcher can do (if he has not witnessed the described events) is confront the available data (comments on online forums, official 'statements'), which may help in their objective evaluation.

Van Krieken analyses the concept of 'civilized barbarism' (2007: 31), which Elias developed in *The Germans* (1996). This concerns a situation where in spite of the development of state structures and the monopolization of violence by the state, a 'civilized' order sanctions 'barbaric' acts (the most notable example is the extermination of Jews and Poles by the Nazis). This concept can also apply in the context of the transformation of violence into another form, such as a symbolic one. If one believes in the stories about *ustawki* (the author of this study has never witnessed such a fight), they are not about the physical annihilation of the enemy at all costs, but about fighting and winning in the framework of certain rules. However, since such fights are illegal and involve immediate danger to life and health (there have been fatal incidents), many observers would interpret them as a kind of 'barbarism'. In addition, there is no external authority which would guarantee compliance with the principles and impose sanctions for breaking them. For example, the hooligan crew of Polonia Bytom admitted that their attack on the fans of Ruch Radzionków had been 'dishonourable' because the opponents were largely outnumbered and severely beaten. This 'dishonourable' act was to teach Ruch fans a lesson for their cooperation with the police (information from *To My Kibice!* magazine, no. 1/2014). It is worth mentioning that in fan circles, cooperation with the police is considered the most 'shameful' behaviour. This attitude goes back to the communist era, when people informing on friends or involved in cooperation with authorities were ostracized. An older fan from Gdańsk recalls: 'There were those who began to work with the ZOMO [the Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia in communist Poland, RK] or the militia. They had no return. No one would shake hands with them. Yesterday they were buddies, the next day they knew they had no business here at all'. A supporter of ŁKS Łódź also mentions a kind of hypocrisy when it comes to 'honour':

> I think all those circles are terribly hypocritical. You know, all this talk 'we're people of honour' and all that; it just means nothing. For example, they got this Widzew guy recently and he's going to be a cripple for the rest of his life. He nearly died; spinal fractures, terrible stuff.
>
> Researcher: But it was a bigger group that got him, right?

> —They chased him around the city for twenty minutes or so; there were, I don't know, maybe twenty people, perhaps; and they beat him with some sort of steel batons. It used to be bare fists and now it's all machetes, axes and hammers.

In a way, the MMA Team Tournament provides a means of channelling hooligan energy in a legally acceptable formula. A similar idea appears in the book entitled *Jestem kibolem* (I'm a Hooligan, 2012). The author, Krzysztof Korsak (a fan of Stilon Gorzów), presents a fictional story featuring a group of fans and their 'adventures'. The book suggests the idea of legal, professionally organized fights between fans, which could be held at the stadiums before the matches: a game between two teams would be preceded by a fight between the two crews of their supporters. For now, however, it is only literary fiction, as it is hard to imagine such a form of 'civilizing' and commercialization of the hooligan craft.

Entrance into the Hooligan World and Its Consequences

While almost anyone can be an 'ordinary' fan who loves his/her own club, becoming a hooligan is much more complicated. First, such a person needs to have a specific 'capital', perhaps not so much cultural as physical, corporeal and mental. A Lechia Gdańsk supporter recalls:

> I trained boxing for many years in the club and I was looking for a challenge. I wanted to test myself in a fight with the best guys in the city; just to fight each other. And as a Lechia fan I finally got to those fans who were the best fighters and I was just looking for an opportunity to fight them.

A fan of ŁKS Łódź describes his way as follows:

> I got beaten up and I decided to start training. I took up MMA, I did [Olympic, RK] wrestling, and then I went to this special thing for ŁKS fans, a martial arts club organized by ŁKS fans; a club to train martial arts, you know. We had this group there for some time; we went around and

> stripped Widzew [the local rival, RK] fans of their lanyards, scarves or t-shirts; we got someone from time to time. Some guys already had cars, so we drove around hunting [*łapanka*, RK], that's what it's called—you go to an estate which supports the opposite team—Widzew, let's say—on a day they play their match, and you get their guys; you get their flags or something. I mean, that's what we often did. [ŁKS Łódź _Supporter]

However, a supporter from southern Poland adds that every hooligan 'candidate' has to deserve the 'invitation' in some way: 'You go to away matches, you do something with the ultras, there are some actions, some incidents, you make yourself reliable, you can prove something and so on. And then you get a phone number. I knew what the proposal was going to be'. The same respondent adds that the 'invitation' depends not so much on physical conditions (fighting skills), as mentality and character:

> Of course, there is a gang [a separate group of hooligans, RK], they train sports; there are a few people like that on each estate, rarely more. But you don't really need to be an athlete. It's about charisma, about being available; you must have personality and character, you have to be tough. It's also about being able to keep a secret. There are guys who…, you know, if they get high they talk to everyone about how tough they are, or they will get out on the street with a machete. They have no chance to achieve anything; nobody takes them seriously.

This statement concerns an important structural aspect—hooligan activity is illegal and is considered a threat to public order, which means that hooligan circles are subject to intensive police invigilation. Consequently, their activity requires special strategies, and, most of all, is based on uncompromising principles and reliable people who can be trusted. It is impossible, then, to be a hooligan only in your 'free' time:

> You can't hesitate or refuse, it doesn't work like this. You must be on call all the time. There are some obligations, you're expected to do something. First of all—you go anywhere. In general, you can gain recognition if you do one thing, then another and so on. On the other hand, if you refuse once or twice and then again, you lose respect. And if you do what you're

> told, people say: 'he did this and that' and your prestige grows. And in such moments you can't leave. [Cracovia_supporter]

Similar values and attitudes are mentioned by a Legia Warsaw supporter:

> These are reliable people, you can count on them; it means, for example, that they are available for the cause. For example, it doesn't matter if it's one or three o'clock at night—you just have to be there and that's it. And there's devotion to the cause; the more devoted you are, the higher up in the group hierarchy you get. Because you are there, people notice you. For sure, those who experienced the most with others can count on one another in various situations, they understand one another perfectly. Well, you have to be available. If someone is there only once in a while, he gets marginalized.

The structure of hooligan groups requires extreme loyalty, but in return it can provide its members with a sense of belonging. Even if it is in fact illusory and uncertain (one mistake or betrayal means exclusion), it can be perceived as a value by people from socially excluded backgrounds. A supporter from Upper Silesia—a highly urbanized mining region affected by economic transformation and the ensuing impoverishment of some areas (see Szczepański 2008)—makes the following observation:

> Chorzów, Ruda Śląska [cities in Upper Silesia, RK] are also very poor. Let's be honest, in fact a lot of people there steal or do other things, and anyone there who does something illegal is obviously a supporter of Ruch Chorzów. And for many of them it's the only chance there, or the only entertainment; to go to an away match, or a game at their stadium once a week. There are mates; if someone has problems the guys will help him and that's how it is pulls people deeper. [GKS Katowice_Supporters' Association]

The above statement must be critically evaluated (this is not a research conclusion), but it does not mean that such words have to be a manipulation or present a false image. The mechanism whereby people from poor and excluded families became members of hooligan groups was quite common in the 1990s. However, in the period of transformation and economic chaos social anomie was much more widespread than today. At the moment, it is not possible to examine what percentage of Polish

hooligans come from the so-called under-class (due to lack of access to a representative group of respondents); it can only be assumed that such a relationship exists. Since economic development has not brought benefits to everyone in Poland, a certain proportion of young people look for cultural patterns other than those that are widely accepted, and hooligan groups offer a certain type of bond.

In the 1970s, when fandom culture was in its early days, the so-called git-people, who used a 'secret' prison jargon and often had a criminal record, had a strong position in the movement. The values of prison culture are the most important heritage of the period in the structure of hooliganism. One of them is absolutely fundamental: a strict ban on any kind of cooperation with the police. A former hooligan who decided to break this rule describes how it works:

> We drove around the estate and we finally got them [fans of the opposite team, RK]. They reported it to the police. One of us got scared that he would get a high sentence. It didn't look good, because he started to cooperate. I was told I could get even six or seven years. I decided it didn't make sense to spend so many years in prison at my age [at the time of the interview the interlocutor was about twenty, RK] only because you have to follow the rules. We got our stories straight and we all decided to cooperate. Only the biggest nutcase refused. That's why so many people drop out of hooligan crews; most of them know how much they have to lose and they don't want to go to prison. [Anonymous respondent]

The respondent was aware that the consequences were clear and irreversible:

> After all that, I had to hide for three months. I moved out and I watched myself. During this time, other things happened, there were other guys who cooperated with the police and I was forgotten. At first I received threats such as "you grass, we'll get you". Hundreds of people got rid of me on Facebook; a lot of them pretended they didn't know me when they saw me. Some just stopped on the street and said: "I have nothing against you, but you know how it is".

One time after all this I went to a match. I sat in a terrace for ordinary people. But in the break several guys started gathering and pointing at me. They wouldn't do anything to me in the stadium, but outside they surely would. I left very quickly and I haven't been there since.

It is worth pointing out that even though the respondent did not 'grass' on anyone from his group there was no longer a place for him in the fan world. There is no 'second chance'. A strong hierarchy in the hooligan environment, its punitive rules and an illegal context of its dealings mean that the first 'mistake' is at the same time the last one. This also applies to other matters:

> If you buy drugs from a wrong dealer—you're fucked. If you sleep with a girl who's with someone in the group—you're finished. There was this guy, he was the conductor [*gniazdowy*, see Chapter 2, RK], a well-known lad; there was an event of some sort, there was alcohol and he had sex with a girl who went out with someone from the top. And he's gone. People make various mistakes—they do something, then someone says something they shouldn't, someone gets beaten; that's the kind of things that happen.
>
> Researcher: Even things not related to the police?
>
> —That's what it looks like. They are the leaders and they can't afford to lose their reputation. [Anonymous respondent]

A fan from a Cracow club confirms that five or six people drop out of the group of hooligans from his club every year—their 'careers' come to an end as a result of cooperation with the police: 'I know dozens of people who can't show up around here anymore'. It is obviously difficult to estimate the scale of the phenomenon—for example, what percentage of hooligans are firmly committed to the principles and refuse to cooperate with the police, and how many decide to 'betray' the rules. The most active hooligans are inaccessible to researchers—they cannot afford even the slightest risk of being exposed.

Criminal Activity and the 'Dark Side' of Hooligan Life

Access to hooligans is also limited for another reason. The secret is the penetration of criminal groups into the structures of hooligans, formation of their own criminal groups by some hooligans, or a 'career path' leading from hooligan to member of a criminal group operating completely outside the context of football. As there are no statistics, it is impossible to precisely determine which of these mechanisms dominates. Some fans have the courage to describe individual cases, and the media have reported arrests of supporters in connection with crimes. There is no reliable data on the scale of the phenomenon. From time to time, the media bring information about arrests of several people associated with fan circles and involved in criminal activity (e.g. Zawisza Bydgoszcz: seven people; Cracovia: nine). The police recognized the Legia Warsaw hooligan crew (called Teddy Boys 95) as an 'organized criminal group' (Bojówka Legii… 2012).

In Cracow, a dozen or so people connected with the Wisła fan circles were arrested on the charge of drug trafficking (Kilkunastu kiboli… 2017). Some members of the Wisła hooligan group were charged with theft, robbery, extortion and arson. The prosecutor's office also investigated the case of the Wisła football club gym on suspicion of holding sessions preparing hooligans to fight with the police and hooligans of other clubs (Kibole ćwiczą walkę… 2017).

Cracow is not the only place where fandom is permeated with criminal activity. In 2010, several members of the Lech Poznań hooligan crew were arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking and membership of an organized crime group (this is an example of transferring social, cultural and physical capital from the stadium to the 'grey zone'). It turned out that the group was organized like a real gang: its structure included the leader, the so-called management, liaisons, soldiers and ordinary members, called 'rodents' and 'plankton' (CBŚ kontra… n.d.). They all trained in martial arts and maintained order in the ultras sector of the Lech Poznań stadium (it would be reasonable to say that hooligans—especially

those involved in illegal activity—avoid aggression and violence in the stadiums, as they are under CCTV surveillance).

A group from Chorzów whose members were Ruch hooligans also engaged in extensive criminal activity. Several Ruch fans were taken into custody or arrested. In 2012, charges (such as drug trafficking, robbery and burglary) were brought against a total of fifty people associated with the hooligan crew of the club. Their organization drew on the assets of the hooligan world:

> It all began with acquaintance between several people fascinated with martial arts who met in a group of supporters and engaged in the organization of the so-called *ustawki* [arranged fights, RK]. As prosecutors say, for members of this group fighting with hooligans of other teams was a form of supporting their team and struggling for its honour. (…) With time, the group grew and developed structures typical of gangs, with people in charge, a common fund and specialization related to criminal activities. (16 pseudokibiców… 2012)

Apart from them, more people from the Ruch hooligan group were detained in 2017. This time, however, their modus operandi was particularly interesting. It appears that members of the group disguised as police officers (and wearing real uniforms) conducted searches in flats of wealthy people who had problems with the law and seized, for example, substantial amounts of cash. The group used information provided by corrupt officers of the Central Bureau of Investigation of the Police (Kibole Ruchu sprzedawali… 2017). Consequently, the principle of 'non-cooperation' with law enforcement agencies is subject to peculiar interpretation when illegal revenues are at stake.

The most common crimes committed by people from a hooligan background are drug trafficking, robbery, racketeering and theft. Other types include making profits from prostitution and pimping (the case of GKS Katowice hooligans), loan frauds (Motor Lublin), car theft and sale of illegal car parts (members of the 'Hooligans Zagłębie Lubin' group). Thus, common interests foster cooperation between rival groups of supporters: they divide the territory of their 'business' operation or at least do not get in one another's way (e.g. jointly profit from the protection of

discos—the cases of Arka Gdynia and Lechia Gdańsk). Police officers dealing with stadium crime describe the trajectory of recruitment of supporters to such criminal groups as follows:

> It starts with minor crimes. Over time, the calibre of the group's expectations is growing. They offer promotion, but in return expect people to do larger and more serious jobs. Their nature varies—from participation in fights, through thefts and robberies to drug trafficking. Hooligan gangs invest in new members. Young people go to martial arts gyms, gain respect in their environment, they can count on help from older colleagues if they are in trouble. (Handel narkotykami… 2013)

Such a process is very similar to 'promotion' in the hierarchy of hooligan groups described in the previous sections.

The year 2016 saw a seismic change on the Polish fan scene: the 'triad' associating Lechia Gdańsk, Śląsk Wrocław and Wisła Cracow was no more. This was one of the longest-lasting alliances between fans in Poland (a system of such alliances is described in Chap. 1). According to some interviewees, this reshuffling on the fan scene could have been related to criminal interests: Wisła, a club from the south of the country, was looking for 'coalition partners' for business closer to Cracow and in the east of Poland. After the split, Wisła fans formed an alliance with Ruch Chorzów (about 90 kilometres away). In an official statement (published on the Internet), the group of Wisła hooligans called Sharks announced: 'This deal is strictly hooligan in nature and it should only be considered in such a way' (Oświadczenie Psycho Fans… 2016). There were, however, other explanations (of a highly speculative nature):

> I heard that the idea of a deal between Wisła and Ruch was born in prison, where top people from both groups had met; they got along there. [Anonymous respondent]

From the research point of view, such statements should be treated with extreme caution as they cannot be verified and thus carry the risk of 'tabloidization' of scientific discourse (quoting controversial data that attracts attention). There are no confirmed statements indicating that

alliances between supporters' groups are primarily the result of criminal calculations. However, some fans mention the influence of illegal interests on relations between supporters' groups:

> We went on an away trip to Lech [Poznań, RK]; we lost 5:1; a shit result, but it was good fun; yes, it was good fun with Lech then; you know, no trouble at all. I mean, there was this cheering competition. Well, but … some lime later Lech came over to play here and at the end of the game they started to insult us… All the people in the Widzew stadium were shocked: what the fuck is going on? I asked around what it was all about … and it turned out it was really simple: Lech hooligans had simply made a deal with ŁKS hooligans [the local rival, RK]. ŁKS told them they had a better network of [drug, RK] dealers in Łódź, and if they wanted access to a good market—you're in, no problem, they said. So Lech people just had to insult us. [Widzew Łódź_supporter]

This comment indicates a significant phenomenon. Many respondents confirm that despite their small size, hooligan crews have a decisive voice in the activities of other parts of the fan movement. As discussed above, in supporters' groups such factors as hierarchy, strength, unconditional loyalty and availability are intertwined. Modern hooligans incorporate the militant ('mafia') character of their structure into the whole environment. They 'take care' of others and the groups they 'protect' work efficiently and effectively. The importance of hooligans is mentioned by various respondents:

> Here, in our country, hooligan crews are in charge of everything in every club. If they say 'Don't prepare this choreography', the ultras will not go ahead with it, no way. It's not a secret that hooligan groups have power. And the ultras do their own things, but only within certain limits, and they have to tell them what they are planning. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

> Maybe charitable activities don't have to be approved by hooligans; people do their own things when it comes to that, but when it comes to ultras choreographies, to pyrotechnics—they must be approved. And it's the same with crucial decisions in the supporters' association. [Cracovia Cracow_supporter]

Involvement in illegal activity may have consequences not only for individual supporters but also whole groups, as was the case in Łódź, where a very strong group of Widzew hooligans was rounded up by the police:

> Those top guys stuck to the same part of the stand. They were always there with their back to the pitch and just stood there, smoked fags and all that. And one day their spot was empty, there was no one there at all. All Widzew hooligans got locked up; the police got all of them, all Widzew tough guys. And ŁKS [the local rival, RK] practically, you know, came to rule in the city. [Widzew Łódź_supporter]

A large-scale police action showed how deeply criminal activity penetrated the culture of the terraces. It can be said that as a consequence the local rival of Widzew—ŁKS Łódź—won the city 'without a fight'. Other interviewees from Łódź, however, stress that the action was only possible because a Widzew hooligan cooperated with the police and provided them with information about the activity of the group. ŁKS hooligans were 'lucky' because there was no 'grass' in their group.

After the breakdown of their long-standing coalition, the Wisła fan circles held a meeting for all club supporters to explain the situation and present new arrangements. The summary report from the meeting reads: 'the decision-makers gave exhaustive answers to questions asked by supporters who were present. (…) As the right people said yesterday, there is no democracy in the stands, but everyone can voice their opinions and ask about problems. Not a hair on anyone's head will be harmed, because we are a big family' (Relacja ze spotkania… 2016). Indeed, it is not a secret that there is no democracy in the supporters movement: most matters are decided only by leaders—charismatic figures who often have great experience in fighting with fans from rival clubs and a substantial record of trips to away matches. The long years of friendly relations between, for example, supporters of Lechia and Wisła resulted in personal ties between people from Gdańsk and Cracow. Since the split, however, these ties have increasingly come to be regarded as problematic. This can be confirmed by an observation made on a coach trip of Lechia fans to Częstochowa in January 2017: a young Lechia fan admitted that he

was going to meet his acquaintance who was a Wisła Cracow fan. Although their meeting had nothing to do with fan activity, older Lechia supporters talked him into breaking up their relations. Old friendships must be over when new order is in place.

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4

Legal Restrictions and Recurrence of Fans' Resistance Identity

As presented in the previous chapters, during the first years after the transformation in Poland, fan culture seemed to be 'outside' the system—prevailing economic and social problems meant that the authorities did not focus on the situation in the stadiums. As mentioned in the chapter on the history of the fan movement, it was not until 1997 that the Polish government introduced the first law after 1989 which aimed to tackle stadium violence. However, in the first years of the Law on the Safety of Mass Events (Ustawa o bezpieczeństwie imprez masowych) the fan community did not become subject to significant restrictions, as the new regulations were not enforced. The situation began to change at the turn of the century, when vandalism and acts of aggression came to be increasingly stigmatized. Various institutional agencies gradually implemented increasingly restrictive control over fans. This not only came as a response to their behaviour, but also stemmed from the growing social sensitivity to all deviations. Arranged fights (*ustawki*) between hooligans became an important element of rivalry; there were acts of vandalism, brawls in the stadiums (which today seem to be extremely infrequent and restricted to lower leagues) and clashes with the police. In March 2003, a huge fight between two hostile coalitions—Śląsk Wrocław, Wisła Kraków and

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Lechia Gdańsk against Arka Gdynia, Lech Poznań and Zagłębie Lubin—which took place on the streets of Wrocław resulted in the death of an Arka supporter from stab wounds. One of the fan magazines sums it up as follows:

> On that day a certain era of fandom was over, from then on we can talk about the era of growing restrictions, surveillance and limitations. At the beginning, supporters from the first and the second league suffered significant restrictions when travelling to away matches. From then on, you had to buy tickets for your trip at your home club, sign up on a list and give your personal details. (Kalendarium dziesięciolecia 2011: 36)

In the summer of 2003, the PZPN proposed the introduction of chip cards, but the move was suspended in spring 2004 after talks with fans (similar cards and obligations were introduced in many different countries, e.g. Italy and Turkey). There were more and more matches without visiting supporters. An increasingly restrictive approach to dealing with the 'hooligan problem' became the dominant trend. The tragedy in Wrocław also had consequences for the fan circles. For example, numerous arrests and problems with the law resulted in a great crisis of the group in Gdynia:

> After that event between eighty and a hundred people from our core group actually disappeared; they had problems with the police, or simply gave up supporting. There is no natural change of generations, the situation resembles a sinusoid, it's highs and lows all the time. It took us a long time to raise new generations. [Arka Gdynia_supporter]

In the following years the restrictions did not ease up, and in 2006 stadium bans and closing stadiums became a reality for many fans. In the second half of that year, many stadiums were the venue of a fan action called 'Ultraprotest', held against the ever-increasing penalties for firing flares. Although using pyrotechnics had already become an offence in 1997 (in accordance with the Law on the Safety of Mass Events), in fact it was not until a few years later that it began to be penalized. For the fan movement, flares became not only a means of cultural expression

(Kossakowski 2014), but also, to a large extent, a symbol of rebellion (Antonowicz et al. 2016). This was not the only case of contestation: in September 2007 fans organized a nationwide protest against Ekstraklasa Ltd., a commercial company established in 2005 by PZPN and clubs from the First League, which became the organizer of top-level competition under the same name.

One important development at this time was the founding of a large institutional body representing fans from all over Poland, which came as institutional proof of integration and extension of the fan figuration. Established on 15 June 15 2007, the National Union of Fan Associations (Ogólnopolski Związek Stowarzyszeń Kibicowskich, OZSK) aims to represent fans in institutional relationships and build their positive image regardless of their club sympathies. In this sense, it resembles, for example, the Football Supporters' Federation (representing fans from England and Wales), although the scale of activity and organizational potential is completely incomparable. It is worth noting that such integration of the fan community is the result of the influence of external processes (changes in legal regulations, modernization of stadium infrastructure, the need to establish official relations with other actors).

It is worth mentioning that in later years institutional authorities were increasingly less inclined to engage in dialogue with supporters, which significantly strained their mutual relations. It also seems that the period between 2006 and 2007 saw the emergence of the 'resistance identity' and 'conflict identity' of the fan community, although some suggest that they go back to the 2004 conflict between fans of Legia Warsaw and the authorities of the club (ITI broadcasting group, the owner of a nationwide television station, Internet portals and a chain of cinemas) (Jantych 2016). Without a doubt, the Warsaw case showed the mobilization resources of supporters' groups (Kossakowski and Bieszke 2017), but it was only a nationwide 'power struggle' that could prove the potential of fan identity.

Law, which develops in the process of state formation and provides a means of control over human affects, began to be an important source of discipline for fans:

> In the old days, you just got a few hits with a baton from the police and they would let you go. Your father might have given you a hiding when you got back home. Today, you're charged with assaulting a police officer, that's a big thing; it's not worth it. Those guys who need more excitement, they keep quiet and they do their thing in the woods. No one jumps over the fence to run across the pitch anymore; there's too much to lose. [Arka Gdynia_supporter]

It is not entirely true that today 'no one jumps over the fence'. In 2011 the fans invaded the pitch and clashed with the police after the final match of the Polish Cup between Legia Warsaw and Lech Poznań. The incident took place a year before Euro 2012 and became a flashpoint in relations between the supporters and the authorities (the government declared a 'war against hooligans'). In 2015, a similar pitch invasion in the Fourth League resulted in the death of a Górnik Knurów fan who was hit by a rubber bullet fired by the police. Such incidents, however, occur mainly in the lower leagues, where security is weaker and where the Law on the Safety of Mass Events does not apply (it is applicable in the case of football matches with an audience of more than 1000). Owing to a high level of fines and stadium bans for up to several years, similar incidents are a rare occurrence in higher leagues.

Legal Tools to Tackle the Hooligan Problem

The 'structural factors' which had the most considerable impact on the fan community include two amendments to the Law on the Safety of Mass Events, enacted in 2009 and 2011 (the latest one was passed in March 2017). There is no doubt that they were motivated by the preparations for Euro 2012, co-hosted by Poland and Ukraine, as well as violence during the abovementioned Polish Cup Final in 2011. The stadium ban procedure became a very useful tool in the fight against hooligans and drastically reduced membership of many fan groups across the country in the next few years. In the original Law (1997), the ban on admission to a mass event was only an additional punishment, imposed (very rarely in practice) for a period of between three and twelve months. As modified

by the amendments, however, it was no longer an additional penalty but a penal measure, and the catalogue of offences for which it could be imposed was extended: apart from, for example, bringing weapons or pyrotechnics to the stadium, it also came to include, for example, using a piece of clothing or an object to cover one's face in order to prevent or hinder face recognition (introduced after the fans began to cover their faces while firing pyrotechnics, thus preventing identification of the perpetrator). The time period of bans has been extended—it currently ranges from two to six years.

In March 2011 the number of stadium bans in force was 1700 (according to the statistics provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs; 1700 pseudokibiców… 2011), and the figure was about the same in November 2013 (1705, see Jurczewski 2013); the number of banning orders imposed in the following years was 641 (2013), 655 (2014), 426 (2015) and 481 (2016) (Zakaz stadionowy… 2018). As interpreted by many supporters, the increasingly higher number of bans in the period preceding the Euro 2012 finals came as a result of government policy aiming to purge the stadiums of 'steadfast' fans. A stadium ban is an effective tool—it requires the person who receives it to report to the police station during the match, which means separation from the group. Following the increasing problem with bans, fans of some clubs (e.g. Górnik Zabrze, Ruch Radzionków, Raków Częstochowa) decided to give up supporting their team during matches played in the home stadium for some time. There have also been cases of imposing bans for such offences as using foul language; for example, Korona Kielce fans received three-year bans for vulgar shouting (Zakazy stadionowe za wulgaryzmy 2011). Football authorities also made use of travel bans preventing supporters from going to away games.

In the following years football banning orders became a more popular form of punishment. Almost every round of Ekstraklasa had at least one match with no away supporters present (in the 2015/2016 season 66% of such cases came as a result of bans; see PZPN 2016). In reaction, fan circles worked their way around the problem. For example, Ruch Chorzów supporters recorded the highest turnout at away games in 2015/2016, even though they were banned from travelling as a group for most of the season. They resorted to different tricks: they bought tickets

as individual supporters rather than a group and received them from their rivals. When it comes to match tickets, in Polish fan culture away supporters can generally count on their opponents, in line with the rule stating that 'A game with no away fans isn't a real game', which also applies to matches between 'mortal foes'.

The statistics of petty offences and crimes under the Law on the Safety of Mass Events reveal the following figures. In 2009 there were 803 petty offences (no information about the number of crimes); in 2010 there were 1065 petty offences and 530 criminal offences. The year 2011 saw a rise in both the former (4916) and the latter (643). Importantly, the number of matches played in 2011 (2088) was slightly lower than in 2013. The number of criminal offences recorded in 2012 was even higher, 873, while petty offences decreased to 4120. The data for the following years is as follows: 2013, 837 crimes and 5685 petty offences; 2014, 516 and 8622; 2015, 492 and 5782; 2016, 471 and 4653; 2017, 529 and 7462; and 2018, 455 and 4423, respectively (details available at the National Police Headquarters website: http://www.kpk.policja.gov.pl/kpk/statystyki/11,Dane-statystyczne.html, accessed 1 June 2019).

The figures presented above would seem to suggest that Polish stadiums remain in the grip of hooligans, and that acts of violence and vandalism occur at nearly every match. However, when police statistics are compared to PZPN safety reports, the picture becomes more realistic. The most serious incidents recorded in the top three divisions (Ekstraklasa, First League, Second League) include firing pyrotechnic devices and using foul language. In the 2016/2017 season, the former amounted to 494, and the latter to 140 (908 matches played in total), and in 2015/2016, 436 and 124, respectively (PZPN 2016, 2017). Considering that they do not pose actual threat to life or health (no such cases have been recorded), the fact that they are punishable offences reflects the growth of social sensitivity.

The introduction of more restrictive legal regulations and, above all, the fact that they became consistently enforced pushed out hooligan confrontations from the stadiums. At the Ekstraklasa level, the last case of a fight between fans which resulted in the match being interrupted and abandoned was the Legia Warsaw vs Jagiellonia Białystok game in the 2013/2014 season (the match was abandoned after 45 minutes and the

guests were given a walkover). Criminological analyses show that in recent years there has been a clear downward trend in collective violation of the law in Polish stadiums: 'the figures recorded from 2011 onwards are among the lowest since 1997' (Drzazga 2016: 257). The decline in the number of such incidents results from tightened control over the most fanatical groups—the hosts and the guests are most often seated in the opposite stands, and the guests are closely watched by the police throughout their journey, and wait up to two hours after the match in their sector so that the home team supporters leave first. The severity of punishment that aggressive hooligans risk is another factor at play, especially in that they can no longer remain anonymous: Polish stadiums follow contemporary trends and have the most modern and most effective surveillance and security systems.

Quite a significant problem in Polish stadiums are situations in which the use of a large amount of pyrotechnics results in interruption of the match for a few minutes (clouds of smoke disturb the game). In some incidents flares are thrown onto the pitch or into away fans' sectors, which particularly affects comfort and the sense of security. In December 2017, during the derby of Cracow (Cracovia vs Wisła), home supporters threw flares both into the sector of Wisła fans and onto the pitch. The match was suspended for fifteen minutes. After the incident, the league authorities planned to further increase penalties for firing pyrotechnics—for example, to introduce a one- or even two-year period of matches without away supporters. On the other hand, Cracovia Cracow authorities decided to stop selling tickets to individual matches in the spring round of the 2017/2018 season (only season ticket holders could enter the stadium).

A glance at the history of fandom in the last twelve or so years clearly reveals that the law has become increasingly more restrictive and has come to affect an increasingly broader spectrum of spectators' behaviours (the phenomenon can be observed not only in Poland but also in other European countries [Tsoukala 2009], e.g. England, Giulianotti 2011; Italy, Doidge 2015; and Germany, Brandt and Hertel 2015). There is no doubt that when Poland was selected to co-host the Euro 2012 championship, state structures began to interfere in the conduct of supporters (Antonowicz and Grodecki 2016). In the photographs from the turn of

the century it can be seen that the fans holding burning flares wear the same clothes as others and do not cover their faces. They did not have to do so because although pyrotechnics had been illegal since 1997, the law was not enforced. Today, the ban on pyrotechnics is very strict and carries the penalty of a prison sentence of between three months and five years. This explains why fans take precautions, such as disguise, for example painters' overalls, dark glasses or masks. The process of state formation in its legal dimension thus has an impact on the specialization in the fan figuration, as it induces solutions which have not yet been considered. The risk related to pyrotechnics increased even further following the amendment of the Law on the Safety of Mass Events in 2015, which criminalized the mere possession of pyrotechnics while travelling to a sports event.

Along with legal changes, there has also been an evolution in the Polish police, as the force came to include the so-called spotters, officers whose task it is to provide a 'link' between the fans, the club and the police. While the first Polish 'spotters' operated under cover (at the World Championships in Germany in 2006), they currently work in cooperation with Polish clubs, where they are responsible for contacts with local supporters (Organek 2011). Although it is not reasonable to expect 'spotters' to change the attitudes of the fans towards the police, they try to react in knife-edge situations:

> A group of four thousand people moves to one end of the pitch, a group of four thousand moves to the other; in the tunnel you can see police units, ready to run in the middle. (…) There are three spotters on the pitch. One spotter talks to one group, one talks to the other, after five minutes everyone turns back and withdraws. [Słupsk_spotter]

The role of 'spotters' is not broadly discussed as fans do not want to admit they cooperate with any police representatives. On the other hand, the fact that such a function has appeared proves that the Polish police is changing and makes use of well-known solutions applied in Western countries.

Considering that supporters have a very critical attitude towards the police, at present it does not seem possible to initiate a dialogue between

the two sides. The list of accusations raised by fans is very long and includes provocative behaviour, creating obstacles to away trips, unjustified aggressive behaviour, applying collective responsibility and treating all fans as 'bandits'. Supporters describe some situations from away matches as follows:

> The thing is that if they treated us like people and not like animals, everything would be all right. I've been to away games three or four times. For example, we aren't allowed to get together on the grounds of the stadium, we have to do it outside or they will close the gates and we won't get out. If you drive, they check absolutely everything, technical stuff and the papers, the dates on your fire extinguisher, everything. You get your car registration seized and you get fined just for anything. So, it's as if we were, I don't know… some sort of an organized criminal group at least. [ŁKS Łódź_supporter]

> When you go to away games it's the police that's the worst danger. In Lublin there was so much gas that a few guys ended up in hospital because it got through their skin and into their kidneys and liver. I tell you, one of them, got a seizure; they took him to hospital and put him on a drip. Yes, they are the worst danger. If there's one person in the crowd who throws a bottle, they will attack the whole crowd; they will gas all the people. I remember once this guy got me out when there were policemen all around me and all of them were beating me up; I didn't know where to run. When they hit you on the head you just can't think where to run. He grabbed me and got me out. It's not like it makes any difference that there's a girl there… [Motor Lublin_female supporter]

Another fan mentions that the sight of armed officers is enough to make a negative impression:

> In the first place, I think that the police shouldn't be in the stadium unless there's trouble. And when I've been on away trips there's often been a large crowd; there were younger guys and people with kids. They went because that was supposed to be a good trip—I'm a fan and I go there to see something, that sort of thing. And then when they see armed police they don't necessarily know that it's gas weapons or blank ammunition, which is of course harmless. When you arrive in the stadium and you see people with

> guns, it's not exactly the sort of thing that makes a positive impact. [Wisła Płock_supporter]

Supporters' dislike (or rather hatred) of the police is so intense that it even affects their social and charity actions. In 2013, the Lechia Gdańsk Supporters' Association held a conference devoted to the legalization of pyrotechnics. Professionally organized, the event included presentations by lawyers, specialists from football authorities, the fire brigade and city authorities, but not by the police. The head of the association explained: 'We don't need the police to do this. We can do everything without them'. A supporter from Legnica who is responsible for numerous charity campaigns mentions:

> We're in this position that various organizations come forward and ask for help in developing their activity; they want us to work together. It's nice. Even the municipal police come here, but I say: 'Janek [Johnny, RK], I'm sorry, but no'. No police, municipal police, institutions like these, no. We can know each other, we see each other at various events, but they are in one corner, I'm in the other. And many years will pass before we do something… The girls here organized an action with the police; I insisted that it should be low-profile. [Miedź Legnica_Supporters' Association]

One factor that makes such relations impossible is the illegal nature of activities of some fans (crime, hooliganism) and, as discussed above, the attendant ban on cooperation with the police. As a result, the police needs to rely on other ways of reaching the fan environment, for example through informers. Sometimes these are supporters who provide information in return for a lower sentence:

> I think that a few guys are some sort of informers. They hang around here and the police got something on them; they aren't locked up only because they give them information. You know, how is it possible that the police know it if we arrange face to face that we're meeting in the woods? You get there and there's police coming straight away. How the fuck do they know? There were a few situations like that; our guys arrange to go somewhere, they arrive on the spot, forty cars or so, and what? There's police there in the middle of the forest. 'And what are you doing here?', they say; 'We've

come to pick the fucking mushrooms, that's what'. [ŁKS Łódź_supporter]

The fans' opinion is not objective, as it does not take into account the nature of police work and the hierarchical structure of the force (officers act on the orders of their superiors). On the other hand, as a government agency (subordinated to the appropriate ministry and to the government as such) the police can be used as a tool to pacify 'resistant' citizens who oppose politicians. In addition, the most radical supporters cross various moral and legal boundaries, and the task of the police is to prevent such practices. It is difficult to reconcile the interests of the two groups. As legal regulations become more restrictive, it seems that over time fans will have to give way in confrontations with the police.

'Civilized' Manners and Peculiarity of the Stadium

In the context of theoretical assumptions derived from Norbert Elias's concept, one should keep in mind that 'the contemporary governmental focus on the conduct of football supporters may be classified as a modern form of a "civilizing offensive" in which popular and traditional mentalities, identities and behaviours are normatively problematised by authorities and actors in the upper orders of society' (Flint and Powell 2014: 71). Restrictive law would therefore penalize not only such acts as physical violence and vandalism, but also systems of behaviour offending the common standards of political correctness. This approach aims to internalize 'civilized' standards, which would become part of 'self-restraints' (Elias 2012) and affect the group as a result. The implementation of legislation determines the advantage in terms of the possession of tools of power and 'issues of power are inseparably interlinked with the connection between external constraints and self-restraints' (Bührmann and Ernst 2010: 4). In the historical process, it is clear that new laws concern increasingly more sensitive and subtle spaces of social life, for example swearing or drinking alcohol on the way to the game.

Richard Giulianotti (1994) traces the implementation of new laws in the UK concerning football matches and observes that such regulations are a consequence of the fact that authorities have defined football violence as a 'social problem', one which has become an issue raised in the context of social control. Stuart Waiton, in turn, demonstrates that the change in the sensitivity of approach to the 'fan problem' is associated with an important cultural and social transformation. While in the 1980s new legal regulations aimed to defend social values and British standards of conduct, in the 1990s 'collective and class-based politics began to be replaced by more individually oriented concerns, and the "public" both became and were treated as a collection of individuated and insecure individuals with policies that increasingly focused on issues of health and (most particularly in relation to football) safety' (2014: 208). Although the influence of social customs and evolving moral norms on the law requires a separate analysis, it is quite certain that more and more aspects covered by legal regulations seem to induce greater reflectivity and transform the self-restraints of an individual, who needs to be aware that the spectrum of prohibited behaviours is constantly expanding. In a sense the question concerns the 'civilising process' of football fandom, although it should be remembered that the process itself is defined in an unbalanced system of power and is therefore subject to bottom-up criticism.

Poland is also becoming a country where 'more individually oriented concerns' play an increasing role. Individuals acquiring their habitus in the capitalist culture of consumption have different needs and expectations when it comes to comfort, safety and aesthetics. Many 'unorthodox' fans expect that the match will be an excellent way to spend free time in a modern stadium equipped with all facilities (catering, clean toilets, etc.), and that the atmosphere will not be disturbed by 'uncivilized hordes' of vulgar and roaring 'fanatics'. A comment by a sports journalist exemplifies such 'civilized' expectations:

> Last Sunday, when I climbed the wide, charmingly green-light stairs leading to the brand-new Legia stadium, I thought it would not be easy to find a nicer one in Europe. We were supposed to catch up with our richer EU neighbours, and it turned out that when it comes to some things we left them behind. That is encouraging. A modern sports arena is also a measure

> of civilizational progress. And then the match started and the stands, with a force of several thousand throats, shouted 'Get the fuckers! Get the fucking goal!'. That was definitely the most popular chant that evening (…) in Warsaw. (Stec 2010)

This statement is significant in the context of the modernization of the country. Thanks to the success of the Polish economy and the assistance of EU funds, the country has made a 'civilizational' leap, which is apparent not only in its modern highways, railway stations, airports and stadiums (also those built for Euro 2012). The expectations of—at least part of—society go further: to make social habits and norms follow the 'modern' spirit of the times. Even among fans there are voices of concern over the excess of vulgar chants at the stadiums: 'Sometimes it's true that you just can't stand all this swearing (…). After some matches you go out after those ninety minutes and you say: do we really have no other, normal chants?' [Śląsk Wrocław_Female supporter].

Many interlocutors emphasize that the stadium is a specific place and that offensive language is part of the peculiar nature of the football spectacle:

> It's hard to fight it. Still, in modern times you need to be aware that some of these stadiums are like that. Poland is no exception. It's the same in England, Spain, where there are radical groups of Barcelona fans. Things like that happen; verbal abuse against another club. You know, it is a rival, and those emotions explode somewhere. [Kielce_journalist]

> I'm responsible for business relations in the club. I often bring some guests who, let's say, are in the stadium for the first time. And it's fun until someone starts… Well, this is not pleasant at all, and it's irritating. And this, unfortunately, is often the case with people sitting in VIP seats, stands for 'cultural' people… I've noticed it not only in Zabrze. [Zabrze_beneficiary]

One supporter mentions that when compared to other countries the assessment of conduct of Polish fans as 'vulgar' is a case of double standards:

> People here keep saying that in Western culture it's so fantastic. And when the whole stadium insults FC Barcelona no one makes a fuss. At the last Gran Derbi 80,000 people shouted 'Puta Barca', I heard it. When it happens there—they say it's a kind of folklore, Gran Derbi emotions, that sort of thing, but when it's here—they say it's bandits and criminals; we want only people with kids and that's it, they say. [Lechia Gdańsk_Supporter]

A supporter from Warsaw mentions a shift in sensitivity in the approach to certain behaviours:

> We let them push the limits… In the 1990s you had to invade the pitch, there had to be fifty injured or an abandoned match to make the sort of story in the papers that today you can read when just a single flare has been fired. Today those who fire flares are called bandits, and back then the bandits were those who invaded the pitch. And back then to make a good headline you had to call those who invaded the pitch bandits; that's why some smaller things, I mean, smaller fights, were not really noticed and that's why they were seen as a norm. Today they close stands or the whole stadiums for choreographies and flares. Back then it really had to be something big to do that, you know. Like the stadium set on fire at the Legia vs Wisła match back in 2001; it was just a fight between Wisła guys and the police in their sector, and fire set in ours; they called the fire brigade to put it out. That was the sort of thing that made them close the stand, and it was only for two matches, I think. And today… [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

Elimination of acts of hooliganism from the stadiums led to peculiar consequences: 'The fact that they became less frequent during football matches meant that other forms of misbehaviour by fans in the stadiums not only came to be viewed as dangerous and thus requiring immediate intervention, but—importantly—also labelled as football hooliganism, even though they had not been previously regarded as such and were actually permitted' (Drzazga 2016: 260). In the wider social sense, it is a process that Elias calls 'the change in standards of social behaviour' in social and human life (2009: 32). In this case, then, the current approach stems from shifting the limits of unacceptable behaviour rather than actual physical threat: at present the likelihood of being attacked at

matches in Poland is insignificant when compared to, for example, the 1990s or the early years of the twenty-first century.

As a result, despite the 'civilizing process' taking its course among fans in a number of countries (e.g. in the UK the current situation is quite different than in the 1980s), fan communities are still treated as a 'social problem', the only difference being that legal and institutional restrictions are no longer explained by the need to tackle the 'hooligan disease'. The authorities of some countries are probably trying to prevent any possible undesirable acts around football matches, but as a result the level of control and restrictions aimed at football means restricting the freedom of people who just want to watch the game. Some observers describe such new regulations as 'panic law' (Greenfield and Osoborn 1998). Carlton Brick notes that 'given the expanded definition of deviancy and "football-related" we might justifiably ask, are we not all football hooligans?' (2000: 167).

Blurred Notions and the Labelling of Deviants

Discussions concerning the process of 'civilizing' and 'modernizing' the field of football encounter certain definition problems. In the Polish scholarly and legal discourse, for example, the concept of 'stadium-related crime' remains undefined—the phenomenon is characterized as 'an aggregate of various, loosely related forms or manifestation of crime' (Chlebowicz 2010: 84). The semantic capacity of this formulation results in connections being made between this phenomenon and the production and distribution of drugs, corruption, money laundering, grey economy, prostitution and the illegal entertainment sector (Pływaczewski 2010: 20). Ambiguity of definition is also the case of other related notions, for example 'stadium hooliganism', 'football hooliganism', 'stadium violence' and 'stadium-related crime'. As a consequence, even academic studies include explanations which are not based on empirical data; for example, 'This "stadium hooliganism" often takes so drastic form that it becomes a real threat to many legally protected goods, in particular life, health and public safety. A brief analysis of information from the Internet confirms the conviction that stadium crime is a social

problem that we are not able to deal with as a society or a state' (Chrabkowski 2012: 69). Paradoxically, however, if one were to apply the definition proposed by Ramon Spaaij—who defines football hooliganism as 'the competitive violence of organized football fans' (2006: 6)—it could turn out that, at least at the stadiums, the problem of hooliganism in Poland is virtually non-existent.

Conceptual ambiguity makes it possible to broaden the meaning, and, in practical terms, to expand the range of activities that can be defined as deviant and unacceptable (deviations are a social construct subject to reconstruction and evolution; see Pfohl 2009). In the Polish case, this made it possible to identify the most fanatical supporters as a 'social problem' and a kind of 'deviation' that spoils the image of a modern and developing country. The discourse about Polish fans coined the metaphor *kibol* (plural: *kibole*, a dialect word with no equivalent in English, which can be roughly rendered as 'deviant' or 'barbarous' supporter). 'Kibol' has become a key word used in public and political discourse, especially outside fan circles. Such terms as 'kibol' (just like 'Gypsy', 'Jew', 'faggot', etc.) are useful as the notion does not indicate any current characteristics of the person; instead, it situates him/her in a group that is defined by its place in a larger structure (Parker 2005: 58). Fans themselves mention this phenomenon (Facebook profile of ultras Wisła Płock, accessed 25 May 2019):

> Fans, *kibole*, bandits, criminals, drug dealers, thieves, killers—it's all the same when the media talk about us. (…) The message is clear: a fan is public enemy number one.

To some extent, what earned the supporters their reputation was their uncompromising behaviour. The incidents of vandalism, which were publicized by media, also played a major role. One of these was the abovementioned riots after the Polish Cup Finals in 2011. After this match, Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced an uncompromising campaign against stadium hooligans:

> Even if the struggle for peace and security for people in the stadiums is going to take weeks, (…) or months, as of today we will not step back an

> inch. (…) This struggle must bring results as soon as possible and the victory must be on the side of decent people who want to watch matches and not brawls in the stadiums, people who do not want to listen to the endless stream of verbal abuse. (…) this war can be won. (Premier idzie na wojnę… 2011)

In the language of politicians there was a division into 'decent' people and those who behave contrary to the expected norms: 'Poland has more important problems today than the comfort of those who want to riot in the stadiums. For those who disrupt order there is no alternative: the state must be ruthless in law enforcement' (Kibice i premier… 2011).

The politicians' discourse clearly demonstrates the tendency to create standards of 'civilized' behaviour which would align with the 'modernizing' direction of Polish sport and society. Press articles also mention the 'deviant' problem affecting the field of football in Poland:

> The *kibol* rules, because club bosses let him do it. Even if they are disgusted and would like to chase him away, they are afraid of losing a client. They are used to football brainwashed by hooliganism, they cannot imagine that the number of cultural fans is high enough to fill the stands and earn money. They are wrong. But until they try, they will not find out. Bandits prevail also because politicians let them. Sometimes it is their stupidity, sometimes it is their calculation. They put hundreds of millions of public money into gigantic, impressive sports palaces, but give them to barbarians. The silent majority, people who love sport, have to bear them because the stadiums are the only places in Poland where everything is allowed. (Stec 2010)

Opinions about supporters included the use of such terms as 'bandits', 'rogues', 'hordes', 'stadium bandits', 'aggressive adolescents in tracksuits', 'stadium hordes', 'fascists' and even 'terrorists' (Goły 2010; Miłosz 2011; Olkiewicz 2013).

Stigmatization or labelling of fans could be a form of the process which Andrew Hodges refers to as 'intra-orientalism' (2016), whereby fans are constructed as 'others' within their own state, nation or society. One question in this context could be how long the figure of the fan as a hooligan and a deviant will serve to legitimize the decisions of various

institutional bodies. In democratic countries, fans might be one of the last groups that can be used in this way. Many others (e.g. subcultures, ethnic or sexual minorities) have already acquired the level of acceptance which makes it unlikely that they would be considered a 'problem'. It seems that fan movements need to take further steps on the path of legitimization in order to convince public opinion of their 'civilized' nature. It follows that fans have to become a political and civil subject in itself. As of now, this process is uneven and reactive. Perhaps in the near future fan movements will generate discourses enabling them to form alliances with other organizations more often. Here, many discursive aspects, such as the criticism of commercialization of social life and the defence of civil rights, can certainly provide common ground.

In the context of the stigmatization of the group, it is important to note the use of words such as 'second-class citizens' or 'outlaws' (Z 2011; Magnuszewski 2014). On the other hand, the fan environment has internalized the concept of 'kibol', which can be interpreted as a sign of 'secondary deviance' (Lemert 1967), whereby a stigmatized group incorporates the stigma into its identity. The mechanism of incorporation of the label 'kibol' can be illustrated by the following comment:

> I personally don't like the word 'kibol' very much, but if for 'them' a *kibol* is a symbol—of anything that's bad, that's different from their way of thinking and perception of the world—I'm happy. In fact, I think most people called by this word enjoy it. (…) For me and probably for many of you, this word does not mean anything special, and if it teases them—it's even better. (…) So, let's be 'kibols', then, to defy the 'wise guys'. And let's be like a red rag to a bull to them. (Maciek 2011: 3)

Supporters have become an important element of public discourse, and the growing conflict with the government has turned them into an 'enemy within'. Following the rhetoric of Prime Minister Tusk, the minister of internal affairs in his government stated in 2013: 'We are dealing with the savagery of a part of society. (…) either *kibole* will get socialized, or other solutions will need to be applied' (Sienkiewicz zapowiada… n.d.). Also the media favourable to the government published articles which stigmatized the behaviour of fans and created a moral panic about

them (Woźniak 2013). It is evident that the political and media discourse has managed to build a clear division and a dichotomous picture of the world, in which the majority of society is an 'established' group that must deal with 'outsiders'. As Norbert Elias (Elias and Scotson 1994) showed, such a division legitimizes the use of many legal as well as moral and discursive 'civilizing' tools. Indeed, increasing attention is paid to the 'uncivilized' language of fans and there are penalties for using offensive words. In November 2014, 102 fans of Polonia Warsaw were fined for swearing during a Third League match, which was an unprecedented decision, especially since offensive language has always been part of the stadium experience. The expanding range of behaviours which are penalized is certainly a sign of the times—increasing social sensitivity and ever deeper control of behaviours and customs.

Resistance Identity of 'Deviants'

As one would expect, the growing restrictions imposed by the government, coupled with building the media image of fans as 'outsiders' and 'deviants', have provoked an oppositional reaction from the fan community. Fan actions reached their peak in 2011; the most famous slogan presented in match choreographies at several stadiums was 'Donald, you moron, *kibole* will bring your government down' (*Donald, matole, twój rząd obalą kibole*); another one was 'Project Euro 2012—stadiums: overpaid; highways: won't be there; railway stations: a splash of paint; airports: provincial; players: weak; red herring: football fans; the government: satisfied'. Football supporters also followed Prime Minister Donald Tusk on his tour around Poland and displayed banners saying, for example, 'And now you will only hear lies' (*Teraz usłyszycie same kłamstwa*). A comment by a Widzew Łódź supporter aptly sums up the situation:

> Fans should be grateful to Prime Minister Tusk for his choice of their community as a scapegoat before the parliamentary elections in a bid to improve his ratings in the polls. This proved to be a great opportunity for them to unite and build a real social group that has its own representatives, postulates, demands and values and a common enemy. (Małecki 2014: 11)

Indeed, this antagonism consolidated the line of division and contributed to the strengthening of fans' collective identity:

> It's an extraordinary situation in a mature democracy when (…) fans try to fight for the protection of their civil rights in a formal way, by proposing a draft of the amendment to the Law on the Safety of Mass Events (…). This comes as the best proof of whether we are only clients of clubs and sports associations, or maybe someone more, someone with their own identity. (F 2011: 1)

This case of identity creation perfectly confirms Lewis Coser's proposal that 'conflict with other groups contributes to the establishment and reaffirmation of the identity of the group and maintains its boundaries against the surrounding social world' (1964: 38).

The experience of 'struggle' and conflict leads to interesting comparisons in the fan community: 'For many years, the so-called state has been engaged in terrorist struggle against fans, who are today's equivalent of the proletariat, which, in addition, consists almost entirely of young people' (Goły 2014: 43). The experience of public exclusion has been one reason why the identity of fans is largely based on opposition and hostility. The sense of discrimination and victimization could have a significant impact in the process of reconstructing the identity politics of Polish supporters. Such politics starts with an analysis of the degree and type of oppression, and proceeds to develop the ways of transforming attitudes that support discrimination. Such a politics not only enables the manifestation of an identity that is thus far invisible, but also points out the reasons for this invisibility (e.g. structural conditions, political interest). Conflict with a 'stronger' opponent (in the institutional sense) induces the construction of a firm framework that gives the impression of 'steadfast' identity.

Conflict with the government revealed mobilization resources and the strength of fan circles. With time, however, it turned out that fans did not manage to create a strong civil and social movement. One of them recalls:

> (…) the fans from the turn of the century just missed it; they were deceived like small children and they let it happen. Protests against decisions which

> made our situation more difficult were usually organized when it was too late. Even worse, sometimes we didn't organize any protests at all! (…) When they introduced 'improvements' in the form of fan cards, everyone only saw them as something civilizing and did not notice the problem that they entailed—new possibilities for surveillance. When we looked at the stadiums being modernized, we imagined new potential for choreographies, but no one thought about the limitations they would impose. (…) We were short-sighted, we were naïve, we were just stupid—we thought that civilizing would not mean erasing our spontaneous spirit and would not put an end to unconstrained fun without any restrictions. (Olkiewicz 2011: 49)

This blunt comment seems to pinpoint several key aspects, including the 'crawling' impact of system pressures on fandom culture and the insufficient reaction of the fan circles to these pressures. Apart from street protests and match choreographies in the stadiums, the supporters did not reach for more advanced means of civil disobedience. They have never decided, for example, on a nationwide boycott that could have a breakthrough result. One of the supporters drew attention to the possibility of such a boycott:

> [A boycott, RK] is possible only if the repressions affect all the groups. Otherwise there is no chance for it, because there will always be a group that 'has their own business to do', that has a good deal in the city or that will think that you have to stay in the stands till the end and try to support your team on your own. (Bez fanatyków nie ma… 2012: 39)

It seems that particular, local 'deals' and interests decided that fans did not go beyond reactive protests. With low match attendance as such, their boycott could have been a significant bargaining chip in talks with the authorities. A boycott would actually have meant empty stadiums, and this would have been a shocking image for politicians preparing Poland for Euro 2012.

The 'civilizing process' of the fan world continued and the 'new times'—modern stadium infrastructure, professional league matches and restrictive legal regulations—coincided with the phenomenon of reflexivity in the frame of the fan community:

> The hooligan movement obviously comes from the stands. Spontaneous trouble is going to be less and less frequent. There's too much risk, too much to lose. It's not even about some deals with the club. It's that doing that sort of thing means shooting yourself in the foot. On the one hand, you build all that hype around the match and the club so that there's a big crowd in the stands. On the other hand, you put people off by making mess. At the game against Radomiak that we played at home, when we tried to attack the visitors you could see that some people left the stadium because they were there with kids or something. That's a much greater loss than it seems. Those people may never come back to the stadium, they may never get their kids bitten by the bug, and that's what we want. There's no way back to what it used to be like in Polish stadiums. (Potencjał w naszym mieście… 2017: 68)

This observation emphasizes the phenomenon of 'functional differentiation'—the fan movement has split into 'divisions'. Although they function in the same figurative framework, they increasingly operate according to different principles and conduct their activity in different domains. While hooligans are obviously present in the stadiums (after all, 'you never know what might happen'), in the context of stadium activity their role has ceased to be significant. The stands of hardcore supporters have become dominated by the ultras culture and it is the ultras who shape the collective identity of fans by means of their performances.

Patriotic Identity Politics as a Form of Resistance

Shaped by the conflict with the authorities, the resistance identity of Polish fans has also evolved into a specific discourse of 'anti-system' identity. As used here, the term 'anti-system' does not mean that the supporters operate outside the social or economic system as such. In many cases, they even use the mechanisms it offers; for example, they conduct commercial activity (sale of fan gadgets) or register their official organizations. Rather, 'anti-system' refers to a kind of 'resistant' and 'independent' attitude, as well as unpredictability. An interesting question is to what extent

this 'anti-systemness' is discursively produced in connection with the need to create the 'identity of difference'. In the context of Polish fandom, being 'anti-system' (or anti-mainstream) means something different than in many Western examples.

In contrast to many Western European countries, Polish fans do not use leftist symbolism or the rhetoric of class struggle (Kossakowski et al. 2017). There are no images of Che Guevara or the hammer and sickle and no anti-capitalist slogans at Polish stadiums. One consequence of this has been the rejection of critical theory, concepts and analytical tools derived from Marxist thought as irrelevant for the explanation of antagonisms between supporters and the establishment. By contrast, this approach is something natural in studies concerning Western European countries (see Elias and Scotson 2016). Polish fans reject leftist ideology as a result of the reign of real socialism in the country before 1989. Indeed, many of them see being 'leftist' as being 'communist'. As a consequence, the fan community in Poland does not have other means of expressing community experience and social discontent than a set of conservative-patriotic religious symbols. Such an identity set is also associated with the specific structure of the fan movement: the hermetic, coherent, 'militant' and non-democratic nature of fandom promotes identification with symbols referring to national and conservative ideas.

A quantitative study conducted among 309 Polish fans (see Kossakowski and Besta 2018) indicates that they very strongly identify themselves with such categories as 'family' and 'Poland', but very poorly with that of 'Europe'. Over 60% of respondents selected the highest point on the five-point scale in the case of identification with family, and 59% with Poland. In the case of the category 'Europe', the highest degree of identification was selected only by 7% of those asked. They also favoured conservative values, both economic and moral (as measured using a Likert-type scale). In the case of economic values the scale was anchored at 1 (support for progressive taxation, welfare-state, the state has a role in economy) and 10 (support for completely free market economy, the state has no role in regulating markets). For the cultural dimension of right-wing beliefs, a scale from 1 to 10 was introduced ('When it comes to cultural issues, my opinions on religion, gender roles, same-sex marriages or abortion, are': 1—left-wing/liberal/progressive to 10—right-wing/conservative/

traditional). In the case of moral and cultural values, the average result was 8.25, and for economic values it was 6.88. This clearly shows that most Polish supporters are attached to traditional and conservative values, which is also confirmed by their political preferences. They generally favour right-wing political parties: the National Movement (supported by 27% of fans), the Kukiz'15 Movement (19.7%) and KORWiN (the political movement led by Janusz Korwin-Mikke, a vehement opponent of the European Union, 18.1%). The National Movement, Kukiz'15 and KORWiN are radical, anti-system movements with a very critical attitude towards the European Union and a highly conservative approach to a number of moral and cultural issues. Support for left-wing parties is almost negligible, as their combined result is at 3%.

The fans usually associate being on the right side of the political spectrum with embracing such categories as nation, identity, tradition and history:

> Fans are strongly in favour of the traditional approach in more general terms, in terms of history and tradition. It's about the attitude to tradition and statehood, remembering about your identity, and a sense of pride about this place. And these things have negative connotations for the left. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

The values referring to Polishness are a consequence of cultivating local traditions—football clubs are a keystone of regional identities, which is a phenomenon observed not only in Poland (Kossakowski 2013; Doidge 2015). The opinion of a Polonia Warsaw supporter indicates that political views also have their historical justification:

> It seems to me that we are right-wing. The history of the club is very strongly connected with the history of Poland and we are even obliged to be more right-wing. I mean, right-wing… it's such a marked word. It's more a matter of being patriots of flesh and blood, we will always participate in patriotic initiatives. [Polonia Warsaw_supporter]

Although fans in Poland do not engage in any political movement as a group (but only tend to express their preferences), they are visible at

events commemorating local and national holidays. One explanation here is that such events provide them with an opportunity for mobilization on the one hand and presentation of their 'performative' skills (e.g. pyrotechnic shows) on the other. Patriotic events mean, for example, celebrations of important national anniversaries (such as the Independence March, held on 11 November). In this regard, the majority of fans are consistent—they should take part: 'We have participated and we will participate as fans in the celebration. It's also politics. When we go, we go as a group: fans' [Lech Poznań_supporter]. The majority of informants noted the importance of the concept of 'patriotism', which is understood as almost synonymous with 'nationalism': 'In recent years, fans have started to approach patriotic issues differently. They stress them quite a lot. (…) In Poznań, fans are focused on pro-national patriotism' [Poznań_journalist].

The Polish fan scene has clear-cut ideological sympathies, which makes it unique in Europe. In other countries, the development of left-wing sympathies in the stands could be explained not only by the multicultural character of many European societies, but also by the impact of the Against Modern Football movement, which involves protests against the commercialization of the game. Such protests can be embedded in left-wing anti-neoliberal optics (see Webber 2015; Numerato 2015). In Poland, this movement is almost non-existent as Polish football still seems to be quasi-peripheral in terms of commercial considerations. Although, to some extent, restrictive legal regulations can be regarded as an attempt to 'modernize' the field of football, they bring unpredictable results. As a consequence, most Polish fans identify with their own local club, which shapes their identity. The most important aspects of creating and expressing this identity will be described in the next chapter.

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5

Fandom and Identity: From Individual Engagement to the Meaning of 'We'

For many people, being a football fan is an important part of their identity and provides them with a certain pattern of everyday life (Stone 2009). The role of supporter can be a secondary or dominant component in the personality structure, depending on such factors as the level of commitment, passion and identification. It is therefore crucial to approach the notion of 'being a fan' in the broadest possible way. Some sociologists proposing the conceptualization of the category 'fan' or 'supporter' take into consideration some crucial analytical dimensions. For example, Richard Giulianotti (2002) describes four categories of supporter according to their commitment and attachment to the club. The proposed classification runs along two axes: 'traditional–consumer' and 'hot–cool'. In Giulianotti's taxonomy, the key factor at play is the sense of identification with the club—very strong in the case of 'traditional' and 'hot' supporters, and virtually irrelevant to 'flâneurs', characterized by a 'cool' and 'consumer' kind of identity. It should be remembered that Giulianotti's conceptualization is not comprehensive, as it primarily refers to the specific cultural context, determined by the so-called postmodern stage of development of football (Giulianotti 1999)—the global football industry, with its unprecedented mediatization and

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commodification resulting from the marriage of sport and corporate sponsorship. While the categorization into 'traditional' and 'modern' fans, the so-called consumers, is legitimate in this context, Giulianotti's proposal does not enable a distinction between certain types. Based on the level of commitment, the category 'traditional and hot' supporter includes activists (fans engaged organizationally, e.g. in the decision-making bodies of supporters' associations), ultras and hooligans alike.

Importantly, most Western scholars analyse the identity of football fans in a particular context. It is not difficult to imagine that they might not have access to empirical data from different cultural regions. The two major problems they face are language barriers and the relatively low number of published studies concerning, for example, Eastern European countries. It is clear that fans from different countries share common values and perspectives (the 'language' of football), for example strong identification with the community and the club, respect for tradition and history, a sense of belonging, and—in some cases—various levels of activism. Consequently, it seems that such concepts as 'identification', 'commitment', 'engagement', 'incorporation' and 'internalization' are very useful in the study of fan identity. Owing to the growing importance of commercialization of sport, they tend to provide a popular analytical framework, for example in the case of research on the 'consumer' and 'traditional' side of fan identity. There are plenty of studies devoted to fans' attachment to brands (clubs, players, etc.) and their consumer attitude. For example, it has been observed that the so-called brand advocates (Fuggetta 2012) represent the most 'coveted' customer type (Linden and Linden 2017). However, even studies focused on marketing considerations stress the significant role in fan behaviour of such variables as loyalty and identification, with the following types distinguished in this context: 'aficionado' (loyal to the game not a team), 'passionate partisan' (identifies with a team regardless of the results), 'champ follower' (changes allegiance to teams who win), 'theatregoer' (seeks entertainment) and 'reclusive partisan' (characterized by latent identification with the team) (Smith and Stewart 1999). Alan Tapp and Jeff Clowes (2002), in turn, propose a typology of fan identity based on the axis of growing commitment (subgroups of 'casuals', 'regulars' and 'fanatics'). Research on fans' attachment to clubs as brands resulted in the phrase 'the West Ham

syndrome', describing brand loyalty to clubs despite their strengths and weaknesses (Parker and Stuart 1997). Considering 'loyalty' as a criterion, a 'real' fan is someone who supports his or her team 'through thick and thin' (Football Passions 2008).

Research on fan identity demonstrates that sports fans in general, and football fans in particular, are very often characterized by an entirely different level of loyalty and identification than 'typical' clients of commercial brands. For example, the Fan Attitude Network Model (Funk 2004) demonstrates the process of internalization of a sport object (e.g. a sport, team or player) into one's self-concept to fulfil dispositional needs. 'Internalization' and 'identification' of individual fans as members of fan groups are also discussed in the frame of social identity theory (Stott and Reicher 1998). People adopt the identity of the group with which they identify, and if this identity becomes salient (is activated), the norms and beliefs related to this group are important factors driving people's behaviours.

In the case of football fans, identification involves not only the collective but also symbolic dimension—the 'faith' in the club. Consequently, studies analysing fans' commitment sometimes make use of metaphors referring to religious language, for example 'fanatics', proposed by Tapp and Clowes (2002) to describe an ardent mode of attachment. Football can be perceived as 'a type of quasi-religion which fulfils the social-psychological needs: to be together in large groups, to voice support, to experience catharsis, provide abreaction' (Taylor and Taylor 1997: 41). Being a fan, then, may be associated with the 'quest of excitement' (Elias and Dunning 1986) in countries where religion is of increasingly less importance. Michael Stein argues that 'sport (…) offers its followers an island of continuity amidst a sea of chaos' (1977: 33). One point that he analyses is the stadium as a 'place of worship', which functions as a 'cathedral' (ibid.: 36). The author identifies sport as a form of 'civic religion' rather than a metaphysical idea referring to 'afterlife'. Over thirty years later, Polish researchers Dominik Antonowicz and Łukasz Wrzesiński (2009) used Stein's interpretation in their analysis of the phenomenon of sports fandom (mostly football) in the context of Thomas Luckman's concept of 'invisible religion'.

Since the research on Polish fans and analysis of their narratives presented in this book mostly concern club supporters (with only occasional references to the national team fans), it is difficult to imagine the discussion of fan identity without first considering the football club as the space of meaning and empowerment. A brief presentation of this topic, then, is followed by the examination of typical ways of entering the world of supporters, which mainly involve 'male' patterns and role models (mostly the father, other male family members or friends). Examples of such initiation also show the role of the social environment and proximity of the stadium in becoming a football fan.

The Club as a Symbolic Universe

The debate about changes in football, which has been going on for several years, leads to the conclusion that football clubs have become 'transnational brands' (Giulianotti and Robertson 2009). Some of them, often those taken over by foreign investors, have been turned into companies making a profit by providing entertainment to customers. As a result, they have ceased to function in the 'old' system of meanings, where they were often at the core of local identity. Especially in countries such as England there is a clash between 'traditional' and 'modern' discourse on football (see King 1997). Although in some cases fans have managed to take control of their clubs (e.g. Wimbledon, Exeter), the new commercial order has prevailed at the top level of competition. David Goldblatt ironically sums this up: 'Many of us, myself included, still look to football as an entertainment, a glorious illusion, a soap opera of distraction. Even though we all know that the spectacle is deformed by the worlds of commerce and politics, we still want to disappear into the zone of play, pleasure and irrelevance' (2018).

In the case of the leagues which have not undergone such a dramatic commercial transformation, the identity of fans can still refer to a certain symbolic universe which has some—smaller or greater—reference to 'tradition'. One case in point here is Poland: despite a significant modernization of the league system, excellent infrastructure (stadiums modernized or built in recent years), professional television coverage and transfer of

clubs into private hands (mainly Polish entrepreneurs and companies), 'hardcore' supporters are still an important part of the whole phenomenon. Their position will remain unchallenged for a long time because new stadiums have not been filled up with 'new' customers who would be ready to pay a lot to watch the Polish league. Consequently, many fans can still treat their own club as their 'good old' space of identity. The process of establishing the club as a 'universal' space of meanings can be interpreted in terms of the social phenomenon of 'legitimation':

> Legitimation 'explains' the institutional order by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectivated meanings. Legitimation justifies the institutional order by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives. It is important to understand that legitimation has a cognitive as well as a normative element. In other words, legitimation is not just a matter of values. It always implies 'knowledge' as well. (Berger 1966: 111)

The phenomenon described by Berger, Luckman concerns situations in which individuals learn the 'objective' social order. To enable its incorporation and reproduction, the social world must be 'legitimated'. This principle also operates in the case of a football club—in order for it to become a collective frame of reference, it must undergo a four-stage process of social legitimation, and become 'objectivated' so that its significance will not be limited to an object or place.

First, there is 'incipient legitimation', whereby the basic language structures are transmitted to beginners and novices. Young fans learn the meanings of such words as 'fan', 'club' and 'stadium', and such rudimentary language structures as 'it's our club', 'it's our stadium', 'we're fans', 'it's our history'. These are definitions which provide an introduction to the new 'world' of meaning, and at the same time maintain this world (transferred from generation to generation) at a very basic level (in practical terms, this kind of legitimation can be imagined as the first time that, e.g., a father brings his son/daughter to a game and introduces them to the details concerning this 'new' symbolic field). This level seems to be sufficient to provide knowledge and ingrain residual values which become more established and binding in the next stages.

Supporters of many clubs run their own 'socialization' campaigns which bring children into the world of supporting. One such example is a drawing competition for children from primary schools in Gdańsk (organized by the local centre of the 'Supporters United' programme). They painted pictures associated with Lechia club (logo, colours, people, etc.), and the best work was turned into a large choreography. It was prepared by the children and members of the Lechia ultras group and presented in the family stand during one of the Lechia matches. For the coordinator of the Gdańsk Supporters United centre, such activities have a socializing value:

> Thanks to our action we have gained supporters who will be loyal to Lechia over the years. Anyway, that was our goal—we want to attract young people to the club and 'infect' them with positive supporting. Not many people have the chance to be familiar with the 'backstage' of ultras work, so I think that in the school hallways they will be talking about our action for a long time.

Cracovia Ultras, in turn, organized a Children's Day event during which children from the family stand prepared a choreography featuring a boy and girl in club t-shirts and the slogan, 'The youngest in the stadium, fans at heart already' (*Dziś najmłodsi na stadionie, a fanatyzm już w nas płonie*).

Second, as in the case of every symbolic universe, there are—often solemn—legends, myths and stories which legitimate the role of the club at the cultural and historical level. They revolve around legendary footballers, unforgettable goals or unusual events. Such events can be dramatic, like the Hillsborough tragedy in 1989, which has played a significant role in cementing the relationship between FC Liverpool fans and their club (there is a Hillsborough memorial to the victims at the Anfield Road stadium). It is not only fans but also club authorities that have an impact on the process of legitimation—they establish museums, commemorate important people (halls of fame, etc.) and place commemorative plaques. This is how the club's 'memory policy' is created. Supporters can build their own discourse on historical events, their own interpretation of the universe of meaning which is colloquial and

selective but fulfils its legitimizing role. Knowledge stemming from club 'myths' does not have to be objective and true—the key is that it is immersed in the structure of meaning.

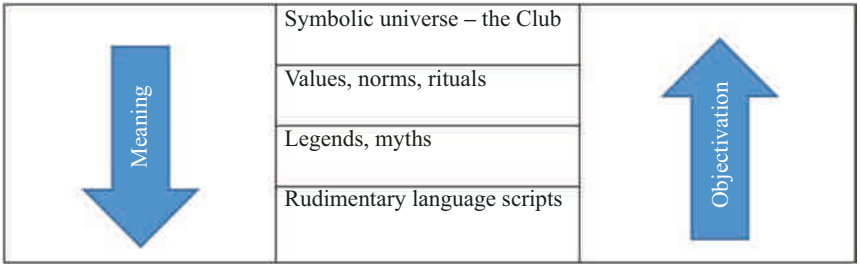
At the third level, legitimation takes institutional forms, for example fan organizations (associations) which create and maintain discourse about the club and the role of supporters in a more formal and, above all, normative manner. Regulations described in Chap. 2—concerning behaviour at away matches and respect for the crest of the club and its colours—constitute the sphere of 'management' of knowledge and values related to the symbolic universe. At this point, there are also various 'initiation procedures' and 'rites of passage' (also described in Chap. 2). It is worth noting that these are mechanisms for explaining and justifying the institutional order. These not only involve knowledge, and hence the cognitive order, but also strongly emphasize normative imperative (what one is allowed and how one should behave). From here there is only one step to the last level of legitimation.

The last level is a symbolic universe which integrates all spheres and meanings emerging at the 'lower' levels. The transition from the initial to the universal level occurs over a certain period of time, and is thus an essentially historical process. In the case under consideration, the symbolic universe is a club written with a capital letter—Club—an objective, universal value which determines all the dimensions mentioned above. In everyday life, this value is expressed in such slogans as 'Lechia is above everything' and 'Cracovia is us'. The case of incorporation of the club as a value and a symbol in the structure of identity involves the process of 'sacralisation through inheritance' (Allen and Meyer 1996): supporters inherit the idea of the club, much like they inherit, for example, family values. This is also confirmed by the results of research on the phenomenon of 'identity fusion', which show that Polish supporters strongly identify themselves (their individual 'me') with such categories as 'club' and 'supporters of the club' (Kossakowski and Besta 2018). The conviction that the 'club' is a very important inheritance is apparent at the level of both narratives and quantitative scales.

The fan narratives which indicate that 'there is nothing more than a club' are quoted in the following sections. The process of analysis requires a reflective approach to subjective statements, bearing in mind that

discourses do not always reflect practice. Regardless of their interpretation, however, the symbolic universe orders the subjective world of individuals, at least at the declarative level. It is not subject to interpretation and valorization. For example, Lechia Gdańsk, the crest of the club and its colours, white and green, all contribute to an objective system of meanings. The supporters legitimate the club in a non-negotiable way, which makes it a relatively permanent point of reference—a vector which can be used to set personal behaviour and build a routine of life (e.g. a week spent working, followed by a match at the weekend). From a sociological point of view, the club as an institutional and symbolic system is invariably constructed by legitimation, a process influenced by time and new situational factors (which explains why some supporters defend 'tradition' at any cost). Maintaining cohesion, or even the illusion of cohesion, of this 'universe' serves the cultivation of cultural patterns that penetrate the identity structure of individual supporters.

In the case of a football club, the levels of legitimation can be illustrated by the following figure:



The next section provides examples of people, environments and other factors that have an impact on the socialization of fans, thanks to which 'inheritance' of the club becomes possible.

The Father, the Neighbourhood and Love of the Game: The Modes of Initiation

In the case of the interviewed fans, the meaning of the club is crucial, and 'incorporation' of the club is almost always a result of the first stadium experience, the first match and the atmosphere in the stands. The respondents' statements indicate that most of them were first introduced to the stadium experience by male members of the family, mainly the father. Metaphorically speaking, initiation into the role of a fan resembles traditional rites of passage, when the head of the family introduces the son into a 'new world', new experiences and a new identity (changing a boy into a man). This explains (though it does not fully determine) why most fan communities have such a 'brotherly' masculine nature: from the very beginning a young supporter (even if it is a girl) has the masculine perspective on football and the role of a fan. As the 'initiator' is—generally—a very important figure (a family member, loved one, friend), initiation involving the masculine means of expression may leave a permanent, identifiable trace. Some supporters are reluctant to take their daughters to matches, which strengthens the 'male' standards of socialization:

> To be honest with you, I'll tell you, if I had a daughter I don't think I'd let her go on away trips. I will take my son on one as soon as he starts going to matches, but a daughter would only be allowed to go to home games. I think probably that's why there are so very few women in groups going to away matches; it could be about this kind of approach among many fans. [ŁKS Łódź_supporter]

The role of the father, then, appears to be crucial: depending on the attitude, he can encourage or discourage his child regarding becoming a fan.

> The first match I went to was in 1993; I was about eight; my dad took me along. He was a fan and he had been going to matches for a long time, so he took me along when, so to say, I was old enough to see my first game in the stadium. It was the first time when I got to know that there is another

> [local, RK] team—as a small kid I thought that a local team is a group of the best players from a particular town or city. It was only later that I began to realize that the rules are sort of completely different to, let's say, the playground idea of football. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

This statement indicates that the first stadium experience is also associated with acquisition of a new type of knowledge, which amounts to the first level of legitimation. Although in the case of this informant the path of development of his fan identity was different than his father's, he was a key figure in the process of fan socialization:

> My dad still goes to see the games, but today we are no longer together in the stadium. At the beginning I went to a stand which was for, let's say, more quiet folk, where you sit and mostly watch the game. But I always looked at the fan stand across the pitch and I wanted to be there one day. As years passed and I grew older … it was around 2000, I was allowed to go to a match on my own. (…) And from then on it's been, like, both of us go to games but we aren't there together. I mean, we go to different stands, but we often go to the stadium together or take it as an opportunity to meet each other. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

In other statements, the role of the father also appears to be crucial when it comes to the introduction to the world of football:

> My dad had been a fan since the 1970s (…). It was kind of obvious that since I was born he practically counted down days until I would be old enough to take me along to the stands. [ŁKS Łódź_supporter]

> The first game, it was in 1995 or 1996, I don't remember the date. My dad took me along to the game against Amica Wronki, I remember that. [Lechia Gdańsk_supporter]

> And it all started just like with all other guys; I mean, my father had been going to the games, he took me by the hand and just took me along. [Arka Gdynia_supporter]

In the case of a female fan, it was also her father who gave her 'football education', although the course of the process was quite specific, as the family kept changing their place of residence:

> I just had no other option. My dad played football and had always been a fan, so he made us go to national team matches since I was a little girl. He didn't take us to club matches because we kept moving all the time, so it was the national team. And here, in Wrocław, when we kind of settled down, when it looked like we were going to stay here for some time, it seemed that the best way to get to know the city, to get used to it, was to go to the stadium and meet people. And that's exactly what happened. [Śląsk Wrocław_supporter]

In a study on female fans of football and rugby conducted by Stacey Pope (2017), those who initiated female respondents into fan life were also men. In the case of UK fans, this was usually the father. It seems, then, that this is quite a universal phenomenon.

Other male family members mentioned in the context of such 'initiation' included a brother, an uncle or cousins:

> Well, my football adventure began when I was thirteen … And so, well, it was then that I got bitten by the bug, so to say, I really wanted to go to the games. My first matches, my first steps, it was with my cousins … We're still fans to this day and it seems to go really well and all that. [Lechia Gdańsk_supporter]

> In general, I think it was the family, I think; my father, and also my cousin. [Wisła Płock_supporter]

Only one respondent (male) mentioned his mother in this context, although her role did not seem dominant. This case, however, is interesting: as the mother and father supported two different clubs, the choice was not a simple matter (the interlocutor comes from the town of Piekary Śląskie, located in the vicinity of cities with two renowned Polish clubs—Ruch Chorzów and Górnik Zabrze):

I got it after my mum. My father is a Ruch fan, and my mother supports Górnik; everyone in my neighbourhood in Piekary Śląskie supports Górnik. I first went to see the match with my father; I was seven. My father took me to a Górnik Zabrze game. He was a Ruch fan, but I wanted to go to Górnik games, like my older friends; so he took me and we went to my first match.

Researcher: He didn't insist on Ruch, then.

No, he didn't. He's never made me feel like that, you know, that he's a Ruch fan so I also should go to the Ruch stadium. Everyone in my neighbourhood, the whole town of Piekary supported Górnik. In those days Ruch was a top club, that's why my father had been a Ruch fan since he was a kid and he went to the games. But my mother supported Górnik, like the whole neighbourhood, and that's why I've been a Górnk fan for thirty-three years, since I was a kid. I've been coming here, to the stadium, as long as I remember. And that's my story; in brief, well, I suckled it with my mother's milk. [Górnik Zabrze_Supporters' Association]

The phrase 'I suckled it with my mother's milk' indicates the 'hereditary' aspect of the supporter status, the transfer of the 'fan gene' to the next generations. Another respondent narrating his story also used the language of 'hereditary fandom', showing that this phenomenon can be approached from an intergenerational perspective:

Researcher: What are the roots of your fandom?
Respondent: It's heritage … hereditary fandom; traditions from time immemorial.
Researcher: So was it your father or grandfather who took you to the stadium?
Respondent: My father took me there when I was six. And I've been a Polonia fan since then. [Polonia Warsaw_supporter]

An important category of people who introduce novices into the world of supporters are male friends—mates or lads—usually those with whom the respondent spends his free time. In some cases, such a group either decided to go together to a match, or one of its members had already had fan experiences that inspired others:

> So, we just met the lads one day and someone said we could go to a Legia match. And so we went there, just like that. We didn't even know where we could get the tickets or how the whole thing worked. It was back in 1990, I think. It was a kind of big group and someone came up with the idea that we could go to a Legia game. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

In the case of a female fan from Gdynia, it was also her male friends who got her into the fandom:

Respondent: Some guys from my neighbourhood were in the ultras group and they took me along to the match. They had always said I just had to go with them. So, one day I did; I liked it and that's how it started.
Researcher: And when you went for the first time, did you go to the ultras stand?
Respondent: Yes, I did, yes. It was the old stadium back then; all of us were in the ultras stand; so, yes, I was there and I liked it. [Arka Gdynia_supporter]

Considering that in Poland women are only beginning to appear at the stadiums in larger numbers, it is difficult to find cases where, for example, girls have been socialized into the role of fan by female friends or family. Undoubtedly, such a process should be expected in the near future. Currently, it is most often a man (father, brother, partner) who initiates girls and women. One unusual case was that of a female fan of Śląsk Wrocław who decided to go to her first match on her own: 'One day I took myself to a match (*laughter*)'.

First fandom experiences may also stem from living in the neighbourhood of the club and the stadium, a phenomenon characteristic of fan identity all over Europe. Although the phrase 'our home' is primarily a metaphor (ownership in moral rather than legal terms), it often also has a somewhat literal meaning—the stadium is sometimes the second 'home', located not far from the family home. In many cases the stadium was part of the informant's childhood, a destination of their 'expeditions' with a group of peers. Even if, at a young age, they were not allowed beyond the gates, the stadium became part of their memory. In this

context, supporters' opposition to, for example, the relocation of stadiums becomes understandable (Fitzpatrick 2013). Living in the neighbourhood of the stadium, or in an area dominated by fans of a particular club, may determine the identity of a fan for years to come:

> It's different in different cases, but I'm sure that where you come from has an impact. In my case, it's also a family thing; we've always been attached to this club. I'm from the city centre, so there was only one choice, really simple—Cracovia; I became a supporter. Another thing is that I was in a kind of rough class in primary school, so to say, and ninety per cent of the guys there were Cracovia supporters. [Cracovia Cracow_supporter]

> ŁKS was just … I mean, we lived not far from here, really, a fifteen minutes' walk. My brother played in ŁKS; he was ten or eleven at the time. And since I was a little kid, it's always been ŁKS here and there. My friends, well, what else can you do if you like to play football? Everyone around was interested in sport, especially my dad. When I was six, it was just closer to ŁKS stadium than to Widzew. I grew up in the heart of the estate with the toughest fans. There was no choice there. Either you support ŁKS, or you aren't a football supporter at all. [ŁKS Łódź_supporter]

It is noteworthy that an individual becomes a supporter not only as a result of the influence of significant others or geographical surroundings. In some cases, the sports factor—fascination with football, own experience of playing the game on the pitch—is the key:

> I played football in Motor as a young boy. We were often taken to the matches of our first team in professional league to work as ball boys. And there we somehow got introduced to the fan atmosphere—first the terraces for ordinary fans, and then the ultras stand. [Motor Lublin_supporter]

The narratives of the respondents indicate that becoming a fan is a multidimensional process involving a range of factors at play—from socialization streams, through the influence of the peer group, close neighbourhood of football 'cathedrals' (stadiums), to playing the game, which for many children (mainly boys, though in Poland the number of

girls training in football is increasing) is one of the most important ways of spending free time.

‘Being a Fan’ in Respondents’ Narratives

Bearing in mind numerous studies on fan identity, this section presents how the phenomenon is defined in their own self-perception rather than adopting the perspective of a particular theoretical framework. A discussion on the respondents’ answers to the question ‘What does “being a fan” mean to you?’ makes this section more inductive in nature, as all considerations are the result of ‘narratives from below’. Such narratives enable an analysis of how the respondents describe their identity and what this identity means to them. The following analysis assumes that although identity is a social product (on which the group’s habitus and cultural patterns are imprinted), it is above all an image of oneself. On the one hand, it is something deeply rooted; on the other it is something individually authentic. As regards identity, any attempt to define what makes one ‘a fan’ will inevitably involve highly complex and subjective codes of authenticity, which are constructed and brought to discourse by fans’ own narratives.

In analysing the self-identification of respondents, however, it is naïve to believe that their narratives are a ‘pure’ reflection of their individual identity. Indeed, when talking about it they use scripts and clichés which can be considered a good representation of their beliefs and culturally expected ‘proof’ of their authenticity. Many fans use similar terms, for example ‘this is a lifestyle’, ‘it’s my life’, ‘the club is my life’ and ‘it’s our passion, our blood’ (Giulianotti 2005; Llopis-Goig 2012; Pope 2017; Antonowicz et al. 2015). Fans in many different places use similar language/discursive structures to express their views about personal commitment. It seems that regardless of the country, this stems from similar processes of legitimating knowledge/emotions concerning the club, which—by way of imitation—become ‘imprinted’ onto the narratives of individual supporters.

In this context, a useful frame of interpretation can be provided by the concept of echolalia, which Anna Horolets understands as ‘repetition of

the form or content of a narrative by various subjects' (2013). Echolalia is a type of repetition that does not generate excess of content but rather an emotional surplus. In the case of 'love for the club', the excess of content is not necessary—attachment to the object is sufficiently 'intensive'. However, lofty words stir emotions and provide additional legitimation, the conviction that the club is truly important for supporters. To an external observer, fan narratives can seem repetitive and boring, 'stuck in an anachronistic order' and non-progressive. In this context, echolalia has a number of functions (after: Horolets 2013): apart from its communicative role (it enables involvement in a conversation, making contact), it also makes a person understandable to others ('I love the club too', 'this is also my passion') and enables the embedding of an individual in a particular social space (among well-known supporters). In analysing fan narratives, one must take into account not only their 'authenticity', but also their role in communicating and building relationships with others. Recalling similar experiences (shared memory) is of great importance for group solidarity: 'The shared memory of past intercourse and its significance is a manual of group membership' (King 2001: 571). Stories of individual fan identity in fact consolidate the social world of fandom.

In their narratives, the supporters talk about the fundamental role of the club—it is a reference framework for individual attitudes and feelings: '[A fan] is a person who lives for the club' [Miedź Legnica_supporter]. The club is treated as an end in itself, and one should make sacrifices for its good: 'Such a basic value is that we share a common goal, and that although we may view this goal differently, we are all Legia supporters by definition, so we all act for the differently understood good of this club' [Legia Warsaw_supporter]. A similar idea is expressed by a supporter of Śląsk Wrocław, who stresses that the status of the club is beyond articulation: 'We cannot describe Śląsk by the values, because Śląsk is a value in itself'. The club is therefore a key element in the identity of fans, one that is sometimes 'organic' or 'non-material' in nature:

> I have Miedź in my heart. [Miedź Legnica_supporter]
>
> And when it comes to Legia, it's something that gives me joy, something that gives me a break from my daily routine. But it also gives me some kind

> of identity, because it's connected with tradition, history, it's something that's been here really long, that has a long history; there have been ups and downs. And there's something more … it's hard to explain … it's difficult to clearly put it in one word. But I would simply say it's a connection with something that's intangible, abstract, a kind of an idea you can believe in and you would like to develop somehow. It's a bit like … maybe it's not heritage kind of thing, it's more like something you're engaged in and you'd like it to grow; it's something that's abstract. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

Approaching the club in almost existential categories has its own identity consequences, as the role of a fan is sometimes considered one of the most important roles in life:

> If I define myself, I say that I'm a father, a husband, a Catholic, and so on, and it's clear to me that 'I'm a Widzew fan' would be one of these categories for two hundred percent. [Widzew Łódź_supporter]

Loyalty to the club sometimes resembles 'eternal' loyalty. In the conditions of liquid modernity (Bauman 2000)—in which individuals are not attached to artefacts, people or social phenomena—such declarations as the following may seem rather unusual:

> For the rest of my life, Arka will be my most important club. I will always support it and I will always be interested in it. (…) I'm not afraid to say that I will support Arka, however poorly it might play. [Arka Gdynia_supporter]

Polish respondents not only express engagement at the level of interest in the club, but also perfectly fit into the 'West Ham syndrome' described above:

> I think that to be a fan is to be with your team, (…) to be interested in everything connected with your team. Another thing is to be with your team whatever happens, when it plays bad or well, when it loses, when it plays in the Third League or Ekstraklasa. And I think this faithfulness is a

kind of indicator; faithfulness in the sense of having faith in your club and supporting it forever, whatever happens. [Gdynia_Supporters United]

Commitment, Fanaticism and Lifestyle

Strong emotions associated with the club make fans feel obliged to engage in the cause of their 'love'. In this case, one of the most important categories describing the fan—club relationship is 'commitment': 'We are committed to what we do, we are committed to the club' [Górnik Zabrze_supporter]. Commitment can manifest itself on many levels:

[A committed fan] It's a fan who attends the games and supports the club. It's a strongly committed person showing that he is a Lech supporter outside the stadium. [Lech Poznań_supporter]

It's someone who devotes his time to going to matches and supporting the team. [Śląsk Wrocław_supporter]

A fan is a person who cheers his own team and tries to support it, not only at the stadium but also by engaging in many initiatives, on many levels. [Warszawa_Supporters United]

In fan narratives 'commitment' often appears in conjunction with such words as 'passion' and 'whole-hearted':

It's a man, I don't know, with some passion, with a well-defined passion, let's say, an interest in sport and sports entertainment. [Wrocław_ Supporter United]

A fan is just associated with some passion related to his beloved team. [Ślask Wrocław_Supporters' Association]

A person who is closely related to the club, committed wholeheartedly (…); come hell or high water, he will go to the match, he will travel to away games even if he had to get up at five in the morning. [Legnica_ Supporters United]

A deep involvement in club issues, as well as 'faith' in the club and giving it one's whole heart, prompts some respondents to use strong metaphors with 'religious' connotations; for example, the word 'fanatic' is used quite often: 'A fan, fanatic, aficionado. They are synonyms which come to my mind' [Legnica_beneficiary]. An interesting example of 'fanatic' discourse can be found on a Facebook fanpage run by Lechia Gdańsk fans (a report from an away match):

> A fanatic—it's a person who believes so strongly that he or she doesn't notice shortcomings, mistakes and failures, who believes so deeply that even the realities don't overshadow that faith. This is what a Lechia supporter is like. (…) It's easy to be a fanatic when your beloved team wins all the matches. It isn't easy when it's defeated again and again: only then is your fanaticism really tested. And taking into account all these aspects (…), ladies and gentlemen, we are pleased to inform you that members of the real Empire of Fanaticism gathered in the away fans cage (…). They wore the only right colours: White and Green. The match result is not everything. We are Everything.
>
> [https://www.facebook.com.com/TWOLechia/ (accessed 20.05.2019)]

It is worth mentioning the time context of this statement: it was released after the next defeat of the club in March 2018, when it was close to the relegation zone. It is possible to ask whether such a 'hot' discourse (in terms of emotional commitment) serves to keep fans' 'faith' and maintain their sense of identity under unfavourable circumstances. Does this situation not resemble one in which a deeply religious person becomes an even more radical believer when various factors (e.g. scientific arguments) weaken the object of his/her faith? It seems that such a mechanism also operates in the case of the most engaged fans: without sporting success, the only binding element is commitment at the level of internal beliefs.

The crisis of the club in terms of its sports performance also resulted in a specific confirmation of 'faith' in other cases:

> I don't know what word to use, but the slogan 'Our faith will overcome everything' means that we survived through the second and third league. Various things happened and we still believed that we would be Poland's Champions and that Śląsk is a great club; and that it was an exile which

> Śląsk just didn't deserve, that we should have something more and that we would get it someday. I don't know if it can be called faith, but it's such confidence and conviction that we are able to achieve certain goals. [Śląsk Wrocław_supporter]

In the case of the club from Wrocław, 'faith' found its fulfilment: after years of crisis the club returned to Polish Ekstraklasa, and won the vice-championship in 2011, the Championship in 2012 and a bronze medal a year later. Śląsk fans also have a new 'cathedral'—a modern, multifunctional stadium built for Euro 2012.

The 'faith' metaphor has acquired a special meaning also in the case of Zagłębie Sosnowiec supporters (Ekstraklasa in the 2018/2019 season). Although in the 1993/1994 season the club had disappeared from the Polish football map (as a result of financial problems), its fans remained active in matches played by their 'allies' (e.g. Legia Warsaw), where they always presented their flag. They made a significant contribution to saving the club, which in 1995 resumed its activity in the Fifth League. Considering that in this case the club simply ceased to exist as an institution, this seems to confirm the 'immaterial' meaning that the club can have for fans. After restoring it to life, Zagłębie supporters gave a testimony of their loyalty to the club colours by presenting an impressive choreography featuring the slogan 'Faith that survived'.

A fan from Gdańsk goes even further, demonstrating that the level of involvement in supporting the club can exceed the level of 'fanaticism':

> A fanatic is, so to say, in inverted commas, a football fan; he's engaged in supporting the team in Gdańsk; he shows off, parades in his club scarf. When you ask him: 'Who are you?', he'll answer he's a supporter or a fan of Lechia Gdańsk. As for me, I'm a 'Lechia man' [Lechista]. For me, Lechia is above anything. I'm a person who takes care of the image of the club in Poland, in the city, sometimes also abroad. I try to do it in a good way. (…) I'm just proud of it. [Lechia Gdańsk_supporter]

The natural consequence of commitment and devotion to the club—when the role of supporter becomes dominant or at least very important in one's personal life—is the diffusion of fan activity into other spheres of

life. At the most general level, in this case a fan is 'someone who lives for it seven days a week, on a daily basis' [Poznań_SUC]. As a result, supporting becomes a synonym for 'life' or 'lifestyle':

> It's been so many years that it's become a lifestyle. My whole life revolves around Arka; and, I don't know, (…) when I say that I'm a fan, it's a way of life for me. [Arka Gdynia_female supporter]

In the case of another respondent, incorporation of the club into his everyday life took the form of 'infecting' the world around him with club colours and symbols:

> It's our life. It's not like I wear a scarf and I'm a fan just for ninety minutes. It's my life; I called my dog Miedziak and he has a sweater in Miedź colours. My daughters, both of them, wear club colours all the time—my nephews only say 'Wow' when they see them in Miedź tracksuits or scarves. I have Miedź socks and fridge magnets, and even my car is in club colours; Miedź is just everywhere. My mother says: 'I don't even want to think what you're going to bring next'. I have a banner saying: 'Go to a Miedź match' on my balcony. [Miedź Legnica_supporter]

The above quotation suggests that in some cases involvement in the role of a fan is transposed onto activities from other domains. Many supporters mention that their passion comes first when planning family events—the rhythm of life is no longer determined only by their trade or profession, or by events such as a wedding or childbirth:

> For me, it's already become part of my life, a significant part. Practically everything apart from my work—where I also try to make some arrangements as far as I can—all leisure time, holidays and things like that have to fit in. (…) All family events have to be coordinated so that they don't clash with the matches. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

> This means readiness for sacrifice. I don't go to away matches that often these days, but I used to go to all of them. My wife just knew that I was going away and that's it. When our daughter was born, she only had been at home for a week when I went away for four days to a match in Portugal.

> I had already paid for everything in advance, so my wife just gave up (…). We really placed it above our family life—to go there, to be there, to cheer without getting anything in return was more important. [Lech Poznań_supporter]

> Your entire life revolves around it, it's a full-time thing. It isn't only about going to matches at home and away, it's the entire life that comes into it. Even such silly things as the colour of paint on your walls—you go for club colours, or when you buy something—you get it in club colours. A friend of mine had a stand where he sold cemetery candles and he bought a booth in Motor colours. [Motor Lublin_supporter]

A female fan, whose partner is very involved in the supporters' association and in helping the club, adds:

> From the girl's point of view, I can say that you don't really have a man throughout the whole round. Your weekends or shopping have to fit in with the matches, trainings, friendly matches and everything else. The first thing is the match and those few hours before and after it, and then you can plan the rest of the weekend. [Śląsk Wrocław_supporter]

Adaptation of daily life to sports competition has also been observed among female rugby and football fans interviewed by Stacey Pope (2017). In some cases, their engagement in fandom resulted in the break-up of a relationship with a partner who did not share this passion.

Community and a Sense of Belonging

Since being a fan is a very important element of identity, pursuing activities associated with the club means that in the lives of many respondents there is little space for contact with people outside the fan environment. The club, then, becomes a platform for communication and interaction:

> It means something even in professional matters. Let's say I visit a client I don't know and I can see that he has a Legia emblem, or something related to the club, for example; and we already have something in common. And

these contacts get closer because we can see this common platform. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

Even if such a platform enables identification with others only at a superficial level, this would not be possible without displaying club symbols in common space:

I think this creates a connection of some sort, something that functions without words, so to say. When one Legia fan spots another, or can see a sign of some sort—I don't know what, let's say a sticker on his car, a gadget or something like that—there is, well, this kind of … Of course, they are completely different people and they probably wouldn't agree on many things, but there is this kind of connection of some sort. I'd say it doesn't mean much to many people and many people wouldn't see it this way. But to me, if I know that it's another Legia fan, it means that it's a person that's like me. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

The use of such phrases as 'common platform' and 'a person that's like me' means that supporting is not only about individual activity or fulfilling the needs of individual 'clients' of the club, but also indicates potential implications of community nature. Describing their individual attitudes, the respondents also talk about the role of community experiences, both positive and negative: 'You can feel this emotional bond, not so much with the team, but with those people around, and this makes us one great community. You experience this together, you grieve together. I think it's one of the reasons why these groups are so strong. (…) it's not only a group of friends from the stadium, but we can say we are like family' [Gdańsk_Supporters United].

As mentioned in Chap. 2, bonds in fandom culture are strengthened by the extraordinary level of cohesion. The strength and unique character of this community—on a different level—is described by the respondents:

We are one of the last such organizations which are still strong … I mean, practically it's just us and miners that's left in Poland, isn't it? So, it's the only such … They know that there is some power in this. [Tychy_ Supporters' Association]

> Fans make up quite a unique community; it's well-organized; and within this community they can do many things and this can be used for a good cause. [Warszawa_Supporters United]

Relations with other fans go beyond not only the match experience but also the world of football as such. It is clear that the ties formed on the basis of football extend much further:

> My friends from Wrocław—all of them are connected with Śląsk. No school or university has given me such relationships as those I developed in the stadiums. And it's probably another important positive aspect of fandom that you meet people you then live with. [Śląsk Wrocław_supporter]

> The vast majority of my very good mates, or, you can say, friends, are people from Lechia. I also have other friends, but we aren't so close. The Lechia guys—we practically see each other every day, and others—we can meet only once every two weeks, or we go fishing once in a while. [Lechia Gdańsk_supporter]

Although the story of each fan is different, their position in the fan world means that their relationships built at the stadium have become long-term ones:

> These are people I met twenty years ago; they have changed a bit over time—the mates from the stadium have become friends I spend time with in a completely different way. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

> Another thing is that it's a weekend, there are friends you've known since you were a kid; you don't meet them just in the stadium but also after work. [Śląsk Wrocław_supporter]

> I've known the guys from the stadium for twenty years; most of them are in their thirties. So, it's been twenty-odd years we've been in the stand together; that's several hundred people who've been your close friends forever. It's like, you go around the stand and you shake hands with everyone around. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

One fan explains that although such close relationships are natural in view of the high intensity of fan meetings, the football atmosphere as such is not the key factor at play:

> If you've known someone for a year or longer, two, three or four years, it's hard to pretend for the rest of the week that we don't know each other. I don't think it's supporting and football as such that matter—if we worked together every Saturday and Sunday for five years, we would eventually develop close relations. It's very natural; I wouldn't mix fan issues into this. (…) There are many places where you meet someone and get along with them. [Śląsk Wrocław_supporter]

The club and the sport are probably a convenient platform, as they attract people with specific needs—those who want to experience emotions and attachment to the club. Considering that such an environment functions on the basis of specific collective experience which is very bonding, it is easier to establish relationships.

One of the most commonly used metaphors in the world of Polish fans is 'brothers in scarves'. Considering that the world of fandom is still dominated by men, it can be interpreted as a clear definition of the masculine character of this community. The phrase reflects a long historical tradition in which men have played the dominant role. Some comments made by fans confirm this masculine climate:

> We're really fucking close. It's even more than a family. You often can't rely on the family, but the lads will help you. Let's say there's a difficult situation, for example, one of the mates goes to prison—the lads will help his family and they will help their mate; his family won't help, but the lads will; they'll visit him, they'll send him a greeting card, they'll send him a parcel. [Miedź Legnica_supporter]

Interestingly, however, interpretations of this phrase very much refer to the community identification and experience, which go beyond the context of gender and emphasize such dimensions as support, help in need and trust: 'I understand a "brother in scarf" as a person you've been to matches with, you have common match experience with, you've been

cheering together, you've experienced emotions together—victories, defeats and other experiences in the life of a fan, better or worse. Well, and it's a person you can trust in general; that's how I feel' [Lechia Gdańsk_supporter]. 'Brothers in scarves' is also a kind of family, a community which is not bound by blood ties but rather 'the ties of club colours': 'I mean, it's one fan family, brothers in scarves, you know, it means brothers in one faith. That's how people talk about other people wearing the same colours and I think it's a kind of a fan phrase that's been used for years. Somewhere on the street most people wouldn't know what it means, but fans always understand it' [Arka Gdynia_supporter].

The sense of 'brotherhood' takes on a special character in the case of the death of a fan. In such situations, what is stressed is not only club affiliation and involvement of the deceased, but also the meaning of the fan community as such:

> When you travel with someone for several years, thousands of kilometres, to support one another as fans and to support our beloved team—first you have a mate, a mate becomes a friend, and a friend becomes a brother! The loss of a brother brings utter sadness and grief, you feel like you've lost a part of yourself! (*Do grobu Fanatyka*… 2015)

This quotation, which is a kind of obituary, mentions a path to follow in the fan community. It always starts with the club—from supporting it and from trips to away games. This is how 'lads' get to know one another, and—as time goes by—how they become friends and ultimately turn into 'brothers'. It is a 'masculine' path, one that resembles 'secret clubs' founded by young boys in 'old' times, when 'loyalty' to an idea transformed into group ties and friendship. While most such adventures begin and are over during childhood, in the case of fandom it is different, because the club as a platform of community relations generally has a longer tradition, history and heritage around which people can create long-term identity narratives. Although some supporters at some point grow out of a certain type of involvement, in many cases their membership in the community continues.

This experience is specific also in terms of social differentiation. Today, modern sports arenas make it possible to classify fans according to their

social status (e.g. sky boxes for more affluent/business fans). However, at the level of identification with and support for the club, these differences seem to be irrelevant:

> I was sitting at the stadium next to a university professor, the head of a clinic at the Medical Academy in Poznań. There are priests, there are so many lawyers, legal advisers, attorneys and businessmen it would be difficult to count them. And at some point … all that just doesn't matter. I mean, when we get into cheering it really doesn't matter who is who, what he does. The only thing that's important then is to be there for your team, to tease the opponents and mess their heads up. But not in the sense of being aggressive. [Lech Poznań_supporter]

> I don't remember any situation when someone's material or social status would be an argument for anything in this community. Something like, I have higher education, so I can speak and others can't; or I'm richer, so I can speak and others can't. If anything, it's probably the status based on involvement that's important. [Arka Gdynia_supporter]

> Another value is that everyone is equal. This is also cool, because the stadium is such a good example. When the team score a goal, it doesn't make any difference if you're a shop owner, an unemployed or a bank manager—if everyone is sitting together, next to each other, everyone is really equal; they fall into each other's arms. [Legia Warsaw_supporter]

The community aspect—framed by narratives of 'fanaticism', sacrificing other areas of life, metaphors like 'brothers in scarves' and a sense of equality—creates a particular kind of identity which is in a sense 'inadequate' considering changes in lifestyle in individualized societies. It might seem that the defence of such an identity—in which the good of the club and community ties are more important—echoes long-forgotten traditions, and that its invocation in fan narratives should be interpreted as casting a spell on reality. However, football can become a substitute for a 'religious' experience, in which the crest of the club is a 'holy' symbol, and fans are zealous believers. This 'supra-individual' identity—even if manifested mostly in narratives and to a lesser extent in the institutional sphere (although supporters establish official associations, they most often do not go beyond local activity in the domain of football)—proves

that in current (post-)modern societies there are still enclaves of strong group cohesion.

Female Fans in a Man's World

The evaluation of all dimensions of the fan movement considered above leads to the conclusion that it is an enclave 'tailored' to male needs and dominated by men. As already mentioned, the post-transformation period in Poland (characterized by 'anarchy' and an unprecedented scale of stadium violence) shaped the structure of fandom (Antonowicz and Grodecki 2016) based on traditionally perceived masculinity, with its cult of physical strength, willingness to fight for others (which, according to some studies, is an essential element; see Kossakowski and Besta 2018) and 'tribal' rituals of violence. This creates an enclave where 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 1987) and 'homosocial bonds' (Lipman-Blumen 1976) are reproduced. Since it is also characterized by a strong emphasis on anti-leftist and anti-progressive values, it is hardly surprising that the fans' attitudes towards gender roles and LGBT rights are very traditional and conservative. The 'militant' nature of fandom structure, along with the ideas concerning God, honour and fatherland (with a strong influence of the Roman Catholic Church), results in a complete lack of the spirit of inclusivity. In some way, the impervious borders which fandom has established (in a long historical process) amount to a kind of 'trap': strict rules and modes of behaviour make it impossible to present any 'unorthodox' values. Consequently, most fans have to foster only one type of masculinity even if some of them are—personally—less conservative.

The analysis of Polish fans' narratives and the content of ultras performances (Antonowicz et al. 2020) shows that the dominant characteristics of masculinity which they feature include the image of a 'muscular fighter' (physical strength and combat skills); metaphors and images related to illegal and criminal activity; images of fans as 'warlords', 'kings' and 'knights' (many ultras choreographies present such characters as armoured knights with the crest of the club on their shields defeating their opponents); references to historical national heroes, especially soldiers fighting

during the Second World War or guerrilla forces fighting against the communist regime; and the image of the fan environment as a community where 'brotherhood' can be reinforced by drinking alcohol and 'ritual' amusement. While these characteristics define the homosociality of fandom in terms of 'who we are', others (discursively) serve as tools framing 'who we are not': gay identity is excluded (words denoting gay people are used as terms of abuse to humiliate opponents) and female identity is marginalized.

Today, the atmosphere of inclusivity of LGBT people in the terraces is unimaginable in the Polish context. Unlike in the UK, where fans generally accept homosexuality (Magrath 2017), Polish terraces are enclaves of 'tough guys' avoiding weakness and cultivating the 'law of the fist'. The situation of women is slightly different: their number in Polish stadiums is certainly growing, mainly as the result of modernization of infrastructure (comfortable stadiums) and the increasing level of safety (a relatively low number of violent incidents). Considering that the league authorities attempt to attract 'new' fans (families with children), women can be regarded as an important source of income. Although there is no hostility towards women in the structure of more engaged fans (e.g. in the ultras terraces), their role is still marginalized and dismissed. In 2018 there were only two official groups of female fans in Poland: The Female Elite'64 (GKS Katowice, the First League, the second level of competition) and 'CzaROWnice' ('The Witches', ROW Rybnik, the Second League, the third level of competition). In many groups, women are banned from travelling to away matches, officially for security reasons but very often in fact owing to their lower status (if the availability of tickets is limited, women are excluded from the waiting list)—for many 'crews', the presence of female fans affects the status of the group. Male fans, then, deny women the 'cultural ticket' to football fandom (Pfister et al. 2013).

A lower status of women is clearly apparent in match-day reports published in *To My Kibice!* (It's Us, Fans, TMK), the most respected Polish fan magazine. They are an excellent source of information 'from below', as they are first-hand narratives whose authors (usually only known by their nicknames and most likely all male) have a particularly good sense of the audience to which they also belong. Most of these accounts are similar—they provide a description of a match from the perspective of

home/away fans. An analysis of nearly 1700 such reports (published in 131 issues of the TMK magazine from 2006 to 2016) identified categories framing female fans (for a detailed analysis see Antonowicz et al. 2020). A 'different' status of female fans is apparent in 'objective' information about the number of supporters cheering the team. Typically, this information is provided as follows: 'There were eighty of us, including four women'. Women, then, are considered a separate category—since they do not count as regular ('real') fans, their number needs to be listed separately.

Other categories framing female fans concern such issues as presenting them as victims of abuse of power by police and/or security staff (mentions of mistreated or injured women are a good 'tool' to stress the unfairness of security officers); physical appearance and sexuality (women as an object of beauty and a sexual object); normative frames for including/excluding female fans (terms and conditions under which female fans can or cannot participate in certain parts of fandom culture —e.g. female fans are very often assigned responsibility for family stands and childcare during the matches); and denying women the status of real fans (in many narratives, situations when female fans undertake 'proper' action, usually only expected of men—like aggression towards rivals—are ironically described in terms of humorous episodes). Such cases clearly indicate that female fans cannot expect equal status in the structure of fandom. They are sometimes appreciated and respected, but mostly in traditional roles involving caring services or serving as an object of beauty.

Marginalization of the role of women, especially among 'hardcore' fans, does not change the fact that the domain of football is becoming more inclusive in terms of gender. This phenomenon is observed in many European countries (Pope 2017; Pfister et al. 2013), where the number of women sometimes reaches 30% of those present at the stadium. Although in Poland there are no precise statistics concerning this issue, ethnographic observations suggest that women are certainly more visible today than, for example, in the 2000s. As mentioned above, one significant factor at play here is that the scale of stadium violence and antisocial behaviour has been significantly reduced. This is confirmed by fans of Polish clubs:

> It used to be much worse, I think; there was much more trouble in the stadiums and so there was this opinion that going to matches or going on away trips involved serious risk. When the trouble disappeared from the stadiums the risk was reduced to a minimum. [Śląsk Wrocław_female supporter]

Some respondents notice the growing role of women supporters:

> Well, the more money the clubs put into all those things that go on around, I mean those things for kids and all that, the more kids get interested and, you know, I think it all begins kind of naturally. And really, there are many more girls, more women, and, you know, and I think it all somehow begins to develop, right? [Korona Kielce_female supporter]

In Polish football such a change was only possible as a result of a specific civilizing process (Kossakowski 2017), thanks to which supporters' groups have not so much given up violence, but moved it beyond the stadiums. According to female informants, this has been a relatively recent phenomenon:

> I think it was around 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, you know, I mean the second half of the 2000s when it all began to develop, right? And today there are really a lot of girls around. [Śląsk Wrocław_female supporter]

The beginnings of women's presence in fandom culture meant changes in this previously 'masculine world':

> Until 2000 it really was a man's world. In the early days you could see that they just had to get used to women in fan life. In the old days women didn't go to away games at all. I remember my first away trip—it took them a long time to notice that I was there with them (…). It was really cold and I wore a jacket with a hood and a hat. It was only when we got there, to Poznań, and when I took off my hood that they finally realized there was a lass with them; it was a great shock. It was a great change because there had used to be only guys on away trips for a long time. And then there were more and more girls, and the guys somehow got used to it. You can see it

> even in pictures: there used to be just a few lasses and now you can see a whole group of them. [Arka Gdynia_female supporter]

Indeed, when analysing fans' memoirs describing the 1990s (Zieliński 1997; Frąckowiak 2016) it turns out that women either do not appear there at all, or are mentioned only sporadically, on the margins of the main threads of fan history. An ŁKS Łódź fan who provides a meticulous account of the period (Ruban 2014, 2015) mentions some women he met during his trips around Poland, mainly those with whom he later exchanged information. The descriptions of away trips, binge drinking, incidents with the police and encounters with opponents do not feature any women at all. Because the subject 'did not exist', there were no mechanisms of marginalization and exclusion of women. Today, a female fan of Arka Gdynia views generational change as one reason that explains a more significant number of women in the stadiums:

> It seems to me that it's is a bit of a generational change that has come about. It used to be a man's thing until, one by one, women entered this man's world and now it isn't dominated by men so much. [Arka Gdynia_ female supporters]

A number of studies mention that women's presence in the stands could be seen as highly beneficial for many actors, as female fans contribute to 'civilizing' fans' inclination towards misbehaviour (e.g. Crolley and Long 2001; Cecamore et al. 2011). Women, then, can be regarded as 'informal police' (Jakubowska 2013: 62). It seems, however, that this phenomenon is not the case in Poland as far as the mainstream of fan culture is concerned: women have not been present long enough. Although they are part of fan culture, they do not have a real impact on its shape and form. Their presence is accepted in so far as they do not claim higher-status roles. The fact is, however, that women 'civilize' men's conduct when it comes to hooligan acts—they are never attacked. Two female fans who experienced an attack on their journeys to away matches (made by car and by train) describe it as follows:

> It was dark and they couldn't see that there were girls in the car. They overtook us and we slowed down and stopped before they blocked us. They jumped out of their car in their balaclavas, and we jumped out of ours; we wore Śląsk t-shirts. They looked at us in confusion … they stopped—what the hell? There was no trouble. I had a few situations when our group got attacked on a train or when we had a stop on a coach trip and so on. But, as a girl, I've never been personally attacked. [Śląsk Wrocław_female supporter]

> Sometimes it happened that, for example, there was someone who stormed into our compartment; but, you know, it was sort of: 'O, girls, alight then'; the worst thing they can do is call you names, you know, Śląsk sluts or that sort of thing. [Śląsk Wrocław_female supporter]

An unwritten rule of fan culture states that women cannot be attacked even if they are supporters of an 'enemy' club:

> There is also this sort of thing that a woman wearing a club scarf will not get attacked; no guy will run up to her and take it away. That's a kind of tradition and that's what it's like, I guess. Or that, for example, let's say I walk with a guy wearing club colours; I don't think anyone would run up to him and try to do something; that's just because there's a woman with him. So, in fact there is a bit of a code of some sort among us. [Arka Gdynia_female supporter]

This attitude probably has several reasons. The most important one seems to be related to the type of 'hegemonic' masculinity widespread in fandom culture, a model according to which women perform traditional roles—a wife, lover or mother, but never a 'fighter' who is equal to men. This is evident in narratives of ultras fans as well as their choreographies, in which fights and 'tough' fan duties are a male-only domain. Accordingly, hooligans are always portrayed as athletic, masculine men. Even if images of women appear here at all, they only serve the purpose of degrading the status of rivals. For example, in derby cities the opponents are referred to using such terms as 'female neighbours' or 'sluts'. Women in traditionally perceived roles are treated with respect; for example, when travelling to away games, men never let them stand on the coach and always offer

them a seat. It is apparent, then, that in this approach women must be 'protected' and men are responsible for them at the stadium, which tends to take a 'chivalric' form.

The behaviour of female fans certainly does not fit this pattern. On one of the trips with the supporters of Lechia Gdańsk, there were three girls on the coach, aged around seventeen to eighteen. One of the men said: 'Respect that you're here; it used to be only us'. The girls replied: 'There are more of us around, but some girls are there just for fun, to show off'. The female fans said that although they had already been on several trips, they did not participate in the atmosphere—they sat together in the front of the coach. Two of them had a drink (vodka with cola); they also drank beer on the way back. Although there were more women in the sector during the game (five coaches and a dozen or so cars travelled to the match), their number did not exceed ten. Except one aged around fifty (travelling with a partner), all of them were very young. All of the men treated them with respect, but that did not mean a change in the 'rituals' of the trip. The presence of women did not affect the language of chants and (dirty) jokes (with a lot of swearwords), or the amount of alcohol consumed on the trip. During the stops, the men relieved themselves without taking much notice of the presence of others, while the women needed to look for a secluded place. A trip to the match is an occasion where men's customs prevail.

The traditional perception of gender roles is also apparent in assigning women to social and care-related responsibilities. In the case of female fans, this means childcare and education of future supporters:

> Well, we mostly work with children. For more than two years, we've been running this sector for children, where we take care of kids. We also prepare school kits, Christmas parties, some tournaments on Saturdays; that's the kind of things we do. Well, we usually look after kids. [Arka Gdynia_ female supporter]

Since the gender revolution in the stands is a relatively recent phenomenon, in Polish fan culture women are still kept at a distance. The process of changing established habits is a long-term one and it is difficult to imagine that women will suddenly become leading figures in ultras or

hooligan groups. The policy of gender parity is part of the 'Supporters United' programme (see the final chapter): one of the two coordinators of each local centre is supposed to be a woman. This principle could be adopted because the programme is funded from institutional sources and the supporters—by getting involved—have to accept its rules; they decide on the recruitment of particular people. The fact that it was possible to introduce this principle, and that the fan community accepted it, demonstrates that the 'infiltration' of new actors into fandom culture is possible and that this 'hegemonic' male world might slightly change its nature in the near future.

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6

Ultras: The Performative Dimension of Fandom

Tracing the roots of the ultras movement is a fascinating activity, because in almost every corner of the world the development of this form of support has been influenced by different local conditions, proving that although football is a global phenomenon, its local expressions cannot be regarded as homogeneous. On the other hand, however, the culture of ultras seems to be something universal. This stems from the fact that ultras groups use similar means of expression and are often faithful to similar principles and mentalities.

The ultras movement was born in Italy, where the first groups of this kind emerged in the 1960s. The oldest of them was *Fossa dei Leoni* (AC Milan), established in 1968 and dissolved in 2005. One reason for its decline was cooperation of its members with the police; it can thus be seen that this aspect is important not only in Poland. This group inspired others in different cities across the country. The Italian ultras style has strongly stressed cultural values and relied on unprecedented, unique means of aesthetic expression: flags, huge choreographies, banners and, sometimes, flares, smoke bombs or confetti. In some countries, the Italian term 'tifo' (which refers to supporting as such; 'tifosi' means simply 'fans' in Italy) is used with reference to choreography. It is worth noting that

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from the very beginning the Italian ultras stressed loyalty to local values, sometimes in the form of extreme political statements. And although over the years the Italian ultras movement has evolved (Doidge 2015), its 'extreme' style of expression remains the essential element of its identity.

The Italian style has spread throughout the world, which is apparent not only in aesthetic forms of expression, but also at the symbolic level—terms referring to Italian predecessors are used in the names of fan groups around the globe: *Commando Ultra Curva Sud* (Politehnica Timişoara, Romania), *Ultra Viola Bulldogs* (Ujpest Budapest, Hungary, a name referring directly to Fiorentina ultras), *Brigata Curva Sud* (PSS Sleman, Indonesia), *Commando Ultras* (Olympique Marseille, France). In the 1990s, Italian style spread predominantly in Europe, mainly as a result of trips made by fans from different countries to European cup games in Italy. Currently, however, the Internet plays a key role in the expansion of this culture. Thanks to videos posted on YouTube, ultras from around the world can gain inspiration from what is happening in other stadiums. On the other hand, there are areas of the fan world in which this form of fandom has not made a significant impact—this is the case of most fan circles in the UK. In many countries, the Italian ultras style has mixed with, for example, influences from English hooliganism (e.g. in Spain and France, the stand of PSG fans is called the 'Kop of Boulogne', a reference to the famous 'Kop' stand at Liverpool's Anfield Road stadium). In each country, however, the aesthetic (material) forms of performance are determined by local conditions. Great choreographies express a symbolic struggle for dominance over local rivals, provide a space for expression of political ideologies, and sometimes serve to improve the atmosphere at matches. The differences also concern the issue of separation from hooligan groups—in some countries being an ultra means supporting your team whatever it takes, and thus also engaging in fights (for the history of the ultras movement in Europe and other continents, see: Doidgeet al. 2019).

It seems, however, that what connects ultras supporters in most countries is something that can be referred to as the 'ultras mentality'. The Italian term *Mentalitá Ultras* describes a kind of mentality unifying groups of ultras, even those who have been traditional rivals—they firmly express their identity, they are unrelenting, and they fight with the

authorities in defence of their values (Guschwan 2007: 254). A similar approach is characteristic of ultras groups in Germany: 'All of them refer to a common ethic, which is the true and solely love for one club, strong critical engagement to club related topics and the awareness to be the only true supporters of the club. They are the supportive heart in the stadium' (Brandt and Hertel 2015: 66). An expanded 'definition' of being an ultra is proposed by a Wisła Cracow supporter:

> An ultra is every fan who loves his club, travels to away games, screams his head off at the matches and isn't always kind and polite, something that makes a particular difference from ordinary fans. Each ultra must defend the colours of his club and react as he should to other club colours. His role is not just to hold a piece of cardboard, to constantly stand on his seat to see what's happening—there are situations when you have to leave your seat and do what you should do; the ultras activity does not end in the stadium, but it also extends to everyday life—it means, for example, painting graffiti in the streets. (…) The ultras movement is characterized above all by independence, spontaneity and, in a sense, radicalism. (Najpiekniejsze jest to… 2012)

Despite local differences, most ultras groups are characterized by the search for authentic experience of supporting, glorification of group identity, stress on the local community, resistance to commercial pressure on football, spontaneity and rebel spirit, and the cult of traditional patterns of masculinity.

Evolution of the Ultras Movement in Poland

As mentioned in the chapter devoted to the history of Polish fandom, there was no division into hooligans and ultras for a long time. Consequently, especially in the 1990s, 'hardcore' fans were often referred to collectively using the term *szalikowcy*, the plural form of *szalikowiec*, 'a fan with a scarf', derived from the Polish noun *szalik* 'scarf' (scarves are a very popular item of fan paraphernalia in most countries) (see Kowalski 2002). They were supporters who waved their club scarves during the

match, defended them against the fans of hostile clubs, and sometimes 'hunted' the scarves of their rivals. First of all, a *szalikowiec* was not afraid to fight and riot. During the period of domination of this form of support, the majority of Polish 'fans with scarves' were similar—they were mostly young men of a similar age who came from a similar social background and did not significantly differ in terms of physical fitness. Most of them were supporters prone to spontaneous violence resembling street brawls. *Szalikowcy* dominated the stands in the 1990s and the early 2000s. A rich and detailed account of the era is presented in a two-volume diary of an ŁKS Łódź supporter (Ruban 2014, 2015). For example, he describes the home production of flags and banners from bed linen or… Polish flags (ŁKS colours include white and red, the national colours of Poland).

In the case of Poland, the evolution of fan culture was different than in Italy, where the culture of violence appeared only in the next phase of its development in the 1980s (Doidge 2015). In Poland, the heyday of ultras in fact occurred after the period of 'anarchy' throughout the 1990s, a decade when the culture of violence at stadiums developed on an unprecedented scale (Antonowicz and Grodecki 2016; Kossakowski 2017). The characteristics of Polish fandom, then, emerged in different, more aggressive conditions, which certainly had an impact on the selection of people involved and left a clear mark on the movement as such. The post-transformation period was obviously not the beginning of the culture of violence. However, although it had already been visible before the breakdown of the political system (see the chapter on history), the 1990s established certain tendencies. In Poland, political content began to appear in the stadiums at different periods than in Italy. There, traditional divisions based on politics and local sympathies began to fade after some time (they had been very strong in the early days of the ultras culture), whereas in the Polish ultras environment, the 2010s saw a virtual flood of choreographies related to political issues (there had not been any particular identity politics before, except some influences of skinhead groups in the 1990s). It is also significant that such topics are more often found in ultras choreographies in Eastern Europe or the Balkans than in the 'homeland' of this culture.

The process of 'functional differentiation' into ultras and hooligans in Poland, which occurred at the turn of the century, was obviously neither formal nor unambiguous. The border between the two types of activity is not firm or fixed when it comes to spontaneous fights, for example during trips to away matches. The situation is different in the case of arranged fights, where there is no place for ultras as they do not train in martial arts. The line of division is much more easily crossed in the other direction—hooligans can obviously help in the presentation of choreographies, although they generally do not engage in their preparation (as mentioned above, however, they have a decisive voice on the content).

The turn of the century brought the development of ultras groups. The 'Calendar of the decade 2001–2010' published in *To My Kibice!* (It's Us, the Fans!) magazine states: 'In 2002, ultras groups sprang up like mushrooms. (…) A division between ultras and hooligans was becoming more and more visible' (Kalendarium dziesięciolecia 2011: 35). This division was not the case in the 1990s: 'The fan movement had this kind of attitude: there was no division between ultras and hooligans. You were a hooligan and an ultra at the same time. We never missed a chance for a fight and everyone kept looking for an occasion to have one' [Miedź Legnica_supporter]. It seems that the increasingly professional and hermetic character of hooligan crews could—paradoxically—foster the involvement of some people in the ultras activity. Members of these groups (also female members, as there are also women among them) must be ready for confrontation (e.g. to defend their flags), but they do not have to train in martial arts. This does not mean that any fan can become one of the ultras straight away—this takes time and requires the gaining of trust. In fan circles, membership in an ultras group is regarded as a kind of 'promotion' and distinction. Having some technical or artistic skill (such as painting or graphic design) can certainly help. Another important point is free time: since preparing large and complex choreographies takes up to a few days, it is an activity mostly for young people with no family or professional responsibilities.

In the 1990s, fans of the biggest clubs displayed simple flags they made themselves, often sewing together large pieces of material, such as sheets. They were usually in club colours and were hung on the fence in the stadium:

> What dominated in Poland until the early 1990s was small and very small flags, mostly in club colours. In the course of time they came to bear some inscriptions, such as 'Ultras' or 'Bad Boys', and simple patterns with the name of the town, city or district. There were also a lot of Celtic crosses—that was the trend of the day. In 1994–1995, the top crews could already boast their large flags. Although they were not particularly sophisticated, their size was certainly impressive. Those worth mentioning include: 'Galera Warriors' [Galley Warriors] (painted by an ŁKS fan); 'Brygada Banici' [The Exile Brigade] and 'Kolejorz' [Railwayman] ([Lech], original versions); 'Legia Warszawa', 'Ultras', 'CWKS Legia', 'Warriors' and 'Wild Boys' (Legia); 'Towarzystwo Sportowe Widzew' [Widzew Sports Association] (the original version, not the one seized by ŁKS); 'Blue Reds' (Polonia Bytom, displayed in the stadium at Olimpijska street to this day!); 'Psychofans' (Ruch, original version); 'Skinheads' (Śląsk, surviving in good shape until today); 'Biało Zieloni Lechia Gdańsk' [White and Green Lechia Gdańsk], 'Ultras Lechia' (original version); 'Armia Białej Gwiazdy' [The White Star Army] (original version); 'MKS Pogoń Szczecin'; and 'Hooligans from Arka'. (Strefa Kiboli 2017)

The supporters had limited access to pyrotechnics—smoke bombs and flares were available only to fans from port cities (Gdańsk, Szczecin) and were very expensive (today flares are available in many online shops and buying them does not seem to be a problem). The 1990s also saw the first flags on sticks, balloons and banners labelled with the names of the clubs.

The 2001/2002 season was a breakthrough in the Polish ultras movement: choreographies became an integral element of football matches. Initially, the rivalry mainly focused on their scale measured by the number of fans taking part. While larger and better-organized groups tried to introduce more variety into their choreographies and make them more sophisticated, fans of smaller clubs contented themselves with displays of the names and colours of their teams. The arsenal of ultras groups came to include such items as banners, pieces of cardboard with printed content, capes, Bengal fires, strobes, polystyrene sheets, flags and fireworks. The following seasons brought a real revolution, as fan performances not only became spectacular shows, but also came to include a message to the outside world (Kossakowski et al. 2017).

What proved a factor conducive to the development of fan performances was the institutionalization of the fan movement in the early 2000s, mainly in the form of officially registered associations. The change was important considering that support shows became increasingly more complex and complicated, which required close cooperation with club management in terms of logistics (installation, mounting, storage on club premises). This issue had already been considered in 2001:

> Only European top is able to prepare choreographies at the highest level. Nobody has been able to do this in Poland so far. (…) This is due to two reasons—organization, which is still deficient, and high costs. While the first problem can be quickly overcome, the issue of funding looks much worse. In the West, the largest supporter groups operate as associations (…). This status means that fans gain sufficient resources and act independently of the club. Independence does not mean that the club and the supporters live their own lives. It is not like this—thanks to their organization, fans have a much greater influence on the politics of club officials in relation to the supporters. There are practically no such associations in Poland. (A to Polska właśnie… 2017: 72)

Indeed, supporters' associations were a more serious partner in official talks than unofficial ultras groups.

Although it is difficult to make definite conclusions, it seems that the first Polish ultras group was Cyberf@ni ('Cyberf@ns'), formed by the supporters of Legia Warsaw in 1999. They were the first to present a large card stunt featuring the name of the club at Polish stadiums. Their name referred to the world of the Internet, thanks to which the members were able to communicate. The group functioned for six years, but its website (www.cyberfani.net), where one can read information about its beginnings, is still available:

> It was us who started the use of streamers on a mass scale in Poland; thanks of us various elements of pyrotechnics, such as volcanoes or stroboscopes, appeared in Polish stadiums. After some time—starting with the match against Valencia at the end of 2001—card stunts became our trademark. In addition, we have organized a number of pyro shows, presentations with volcanoes, fireworks, confetti, and so on. (Kim jesteśmy? 2005)

The place of Cyberf@ns was taken by the group called 'Unknown Perpetrators' (*Nieznani Sprawcy*), which is active to this day and is a leading ultras crew not only in Poland but also in Europe. Their choreographies are appreciated all over the globe—they were recognized as number one worldwide by the Ultras World portal for two consecutive years: 2016 and 2017.

In the first years of the new century, numerous ultras groups formed both in large urban centres and in towns, including e-Widzew (Widzew Łódź), Ultras Lech'01 (Lech Poznań), Netf@ns Gieksa (GKS Katowice), IFC Poloni@'01 (Polonia Warsaw), Wiśl@cy'01 ('Wisła Guys', Wisła Cracow), Ultra Force (ŁKS Łódź), Ż@bole 1948 ('Zabrze Guys', lit. 'frogs', Górnik Zabrze), Armada AG (Arka Gdynia), Ultra Warriors'02 (GKS Tychy), Globe Trotters'02 (Hutnik Cracow), IFC N@fciarze (Petrochemia Płock, now Wisła Płock), and UG Green Devils'02 (Stal Stalowa Wola). Some of these groups later ceased to exist or have since evolved into new ones. For example, Wiśl@cy'01 became Ultra Wisła (2003), which included various subgroups over the years and is still active today. The situation was similar in Katowice, where the new group Ultras GieKSa was established in 2003, mainly based on members of Netf@ans Gieksa. Most of the groups formed in a similar way: the idea came from several involved fans, as was the case of Ultras Force (ŁKS Łódź):

> The idea to start the Ultra Force group came from K, together with me and a few other people. You could say that the idea to form an ultras group supporting our club was born in the heads of four or five people. It's important to remember that they had been engaged in ŁKS fan life before. (…) One source of our inspiration, of our idea to develop our activity, was the Internet, which was only getting popular at the time. We looked at what other, mostly foreign, crews were doing. We also read *Nasza Legia* [Our Legia, a fan magazine of Legia Warsaw supporters, RK], which had a column devoted to what was going on in the fan world in Europe. And so we came to the conclusion that it would be great to have something like that here, in the ŁKS stadium. We particularly liked the Italian style and we decided to follow it. What we did in the early days was really spontaneous. Someone brought streamers, someone else got hold of confetti, M's father got us some fishing rods—we used them as flag poles; he also helped us to get access to pyrotechnics (…). (Kim jesteśmy? n.d.)

The first half of the 2000s brought a real revolution in the ultras movement. All over Poland ultras groups competed in preparing sophisticated choreographies; the ever easier access to materials and flares meant that performances could be presented almost every weekend. One factor that facilitated the rough 'spontaneity' of the shows was the passive attitude of security guards and the police when it came to the use of pyrotechnics. Although this activity was banned under the Act on Mass Event Security, which had been in force since 1997, the law was not strictly enforced. After some time, however, the ultras movement experienced 'choreography overload' stemming from fierce competition between different crews. The second half of the 2000s and the early 2010s were different times—a period of ever stronger legal restrictions. As a consequence, the ultras had to develop new strategies, mainly those aiming to avoid omnipresent CCTV surveillance in the stadiums. One important element that influenced the evolution of the movement was stronger stress on the identity content that goes beyond supporting the team: patriotic ideas related to current politics significantly expanded the thematic scope of performances.

An important variable affecting the development of ultras groups is the constant process of generation change. This type of activity requires a lot of time, which means it is only possible to pursue it without too many obligations in private life. In many cases, involvement in the ultras domain usually lasts several years, which the stories of the abovementioned groups seem to confirm. What they need in order to survive is a continuous flow of new people. An Arka Gdynia fan talks about this process as follows:

> It seems to me that it was so natural, that it was good when we were young. But after a few years it was no longer enough, and now I'm active in the supporters' association and I do something completely different. And let the young folks show up, because ultras is, so to speak, more for young people; I mean preparing choreographies and so on. And there is such a generational every few years.

In many cases, changing priorities in life, when work and family come first, means that involvement in ultras activity is over. However, one of

the Pogoń Szczecin ultras explains that this choice is not always so obvious:

> Studies, work, family, a woman—just try to fit it all in. And, well, women—just go and ask any woman who's with an ultra. It's often been, like, you face this dilemma and no matter how hard you try to think about it you eventually choose a sleepless night spent preparing a choreography, a match at home, or a trip to away game. And it's not like you love it more—it's just the way we are. Those sleepless nights spent preparing choreographies and the fun presenting them at the matches—that's something that gives us a kick, just like the roar of the stands or spending most of a day or night on the train [to get to an away match, RK]. (Wywiad z Ultrasami Pogoni Szczecin 2013)

By analysing the stories of ultras fans it can be clearly seen that in many cases, usually at the age of around thirty at the latest, they decide to change their place in fan culture. Some begin to work with supporters' associations, and others give way to younger members of the movement: they step aside and are ready to help if required.

Distinctive Features of Ultras Performances

The use of spectacular aesthetic forms serves the purpose of not only supporting one's own team (and discouraging rivals), it is also in fact a kind of performance—a presentation that familiarizes the audience—observers—with the content (and form) of a particular culture. Ultras choreographies also play such a role. At this point it is worth noting that the meaning of the word 'performance' is not unequivocal, and that the combination of two ways in which it can be understood seems important in the case under consideration: performance as a demonstration of skills (artistic, formal, but also logistic, etc.) and as a means of expression of a culturally codified pattern of behaviour. According to Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'cultural performance is the social process by which actors, individually or in concert, display for others the meaning of their social situation' (2006: 32). In the analysis of ultras activity, it is also useful to incorporate

John J. MacAloon's approach, according to which 'cultural performances' are 'more than entertainment, more than didactic or persuasive formulations, and more than cathartic indulgences. They are occasions in which as a culture or society we reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatise our collective myths and history, present ourselves with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others' (1984: 1). Fan performances, then, reflect the culture of this group, including its concepts and collective narratives.

On the other hand, performances are a form of commentary on contemporary reality and cannot be viewed as lofty cultural forms. In the perspective adopted by Erving Goffman (1956) performance is 'dramaturgical' in nature and aims to create a framework that puts a specific sequence of actions in front of people who act as spectators. Such frameworks are applied to distinct fragments of experience. Without frameworks, experiences and meanings would remain just 'ordinary'. This can be seen in the choreography of Legia Warsaw ultras featuring the slogan 'Ultras. We hate everyone' (*Ultras. Nienawidzimy wszystkich*). On the one hand, this is an expression of the 'ultras mentality', while on the other it is a kind of 'disguise' or a spectacle staged in order to impress the audience. The striking content of this choreography (a huge skull in the background of the inscription does not create positive connotations) is not accidental—generating the effect of 'scandal' and 'repulsion' is a fairly common strategy of Polish ultras. It is a performance that enables supporters to play the role of 'bad' football fans, a performative presentation of 'deviant' identity, which has been discussed in previous chapters. This performance plays on the image; it is a dramaturgical emotional shock presented—not accidentally—during a match, an occasion when reality is 'suspended', when even rational, respectable representatives of the culture of late capitalism (bankers and managers visiting the stadium) decide that they can behave differently than usual (e.g. using obscene language).

Justifying not quite 'civilized' behaviour at the stadiums (obscene chants, swearwords), fans and footballers, as well as some officials and journalists, sometimes say that 'the stadium is not a theatre', and hence 'strong' language is acceptable here. Meanwhile, it seems that it is quite the opposite—the stadium is a theatre *par excellence*: it is a venue of a multi-level performance/spectacle. The fans present their choreographies

and the players simulate fouls or perform spectacular 'goal celebrations' (gestures of joy after scoring a goal; the most renowned players have their own unique ones which sometimes become their trademark, as is the case of a Real Madrid player, Gareth Bale).

Ultras choreographies display several features of performance described by Jacek Wachowski (2011). Above all, performances should serve a certain purpose, and should be pragmatic and functional; their functions can be material, emotional, spiritual or aesthetic. In the case of ultras shows, there are at least a few functions which can be considered. They mostly aim to provide support to the club, show loyalty and love to the team, demonstrate the skills and capabilities of the ultras group, and promote values familiar to the fans; they can also comment on the current socio-political situation (examples of thematic performances are discussed in more detail later in this chapter). It is worth stressing that the purposes of performances may apply to both ultras and other viewers, so they can be treated as a voice in a 'dialogue' (e.g. they can come as a response to an earlier choreography of the rival, a decision made by politicians, etc.); they can also be understandable or incomprehensible, useful or useless (the usefulness or unsuitability of the content of performances may be determined, for example, by the political situation). For years, Polish ultras have presented content related to anti-communism or glorification of heroic attitudes (see categories of performances further in this chapter). Since 2015, political authorities have viewed such content more favourably—the Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS), which won the parliamentary elections, cultivates similar conservative values (for more detail, see Woźniak et al. 2019).

The 'usefulness' of ultras performances can also be considered in a broader context of times when most cultural practices have been codified and commodified (Szlendak 2004). In a market economy, even subcultural groups can become a 'commodity', and this applies also to ultras and their performances. The key factor at play here is that Polish football arenas have become a space of contact between at least two social worlds which are very far apart in terms of mental, economic and moral aspects outside the stadium reality. Stadium owners and club managers are trying to attract the middle class and urban elite (business managers, doctors, lawyers, local and national politicians) with purpose-designed skyboxes

and VIP boxes. However, the Polish football league still does not guarantee an attractive sports spectacle in terms of quality of football. What can be offered as an attraction is a spectacle prepared by ultras, for example, at Legia Warsaw ultras stand (called *Żyleta*, 'The Razor'), where several thousand fans can rhythmically jump and display stunning choreographies (for its 10th anniversary, celebrated during the match against Śląsk Wrocław in 2015, the Legia ultras group called Unknown Perpetrators (*Nieznani Sprawcy*) prepared five enormous choreographies with a lot of flares and smoke bombs). Ultras culture has become an attraction, a commodity, a part of the spectacle that can be 'consumed' by VIPs and other supporters, especially when the situation on the pitch is not very interesting. This is evidenced by numerous photographs and recordings taken of events in the ultras sector, which display a scenario resembling the behaviour of the audience during other cultural performances, such as pop and rock concerts. In this way, the stadiums are the meeting spaces between groups that have no contact elsewhere because they represent distant cultures (Antonowicz et al. 2015). To some extent, though unintentionally, ultras supporters, who are characterized by a mentality that opposes the commercialization of football, become victims of exploitation, part of the neoliberal football machine (Kennedy and Kennedy 2016).

Another feature of performances is that they are distinguished by a specific structure. They must be shown to the public, because the presence of the audience is crucial (audience participation can be direct or mediated). The structure of performances is determined by a number of factors, both those dependent on and independent of fans' abilities. The size and scale of a choreography depends on available resources and the number of people involved in the whole process. Ultras groups in small clubs—by definition—have less potential in this respect, and thus their performances are smaller and have a simpler form, as they have to be prepared by fewer people.

Some aspects, however, do not depend on the skills and resources of the fans. These include, for example, the design of the stadium and the stand, relations with the club and legal restrictions. Some stands, especially those in older stadiums, have a low inclination angle, which makes it more difficult to present an impressive choreography called *sektorówka* (the name derived from the Polish word *sektor* 'sector')—a giant crowd

flag/banner which often covers the whole or most of the ultras sector (most often unfurled from the bottom to the top of the stand, and less frequently the other way round). If the inclination angle is low, the image content can be invisible to people sitting in other parts of the stadium. The Ruch Chorzów stadium (opened in 1935) is one case in point: the ultras sector (just like other ones) is very small there—it has only eight rows of seats. Additionally, when the ultras of Ruch hang their flags on the fence separating the sector from the pitch, almost half of their stand is invisible. In this case, other forms of match spectacle are suitable, for example the so-called chaos—waving many small flags, sometimes accompanied by flares or smoke bombs. In some stadiums fans have a roof above their grandstand, thanks to which they can design suspended choreographies (e.g. GKS Katowice, Polonia Bytom, Śląsk Wrocław). New stadiums, which have sectors with a fairly high angle of inclination (e.g. Legia Warsaw, Lech Poznań, Lechia Gdańsk), provide very good logistic and technical conditions. It is paradoxical that many of them were built in the spirit of 'modern' football, so that they would serve as a commercial and mediated football spectacle, but they have now become an excellent venue for the aesthetic expression of 'non-modern', 'barbarous' supporters—ultras.

Structural possibilities also result from the relationship between the ultras and club authorities. In the case of large groups with a large number of flags and banners at their disposal, a storage room becomes useful. The authorities of the largest Polish clubs make storage space available, which can be seen as a sign of their support for the activity of fans. An additional advantage is that ultras' accessories are (at least theoretically) safer—they do not have to be transported to the stadium, which always involves the risk of having them seized by (local) rivals. This is particularly important when it comes to flags. One example of their significance is the incident from 2017 when masked fans of Ruch Chorzów seized the flags of GKS Katowice supporters stored in a room on club premises. Some of those flags were later burnt during a Ruch Chorzów match and in the streets of Katowice (more such practices are mentioned further below).

Decisions of the club or external authorities (e.g. local government) are another factor that may hamper the presentation of ultras

choreographies. The most obvious example is closing the doors to the stadium, imposed, for example, by the governor of the province, or closing the ultras stand. In the latter case, although fans can move to other stands, the situation becomes problematic since they have to take into account and respect 'ordinary' fans who have their tickets. Another problem is that the choreography they prepared has to be displayed in different conditions than planned. This was the case during a Lechia Gdańsk match when the ultras had to move to the upper level of the stadium. They had to take into account that below them was an 'ordinary' sector of Lechia supporters and throwing any objects was out of the question (they would be throwing them at supporters of their own team). The upper level attracts less attention from other fans, who look towards the pitch or around it most of the time. Under normal circumstances, and typically for Poland, the Lechia ultras sector is right behind a goal, which gives more opportunities to react to the events on the pitch and catches the eye of TV cameras and other supporters in the stadium. The closure of the ultras stand is therefore a problematic situation for fans in a number of ways.

Wachowski observes that performances are delimited (they have a more or less clear beginning and ending), which is also the case of ultras shows: they can last for a shorter or longer period, but the time frame can be easily noticed. The beginning and ending are often spectacular. In addition, such performances can be a combination of different parts with several beginnings and endings over the entire event. Some of those parts have hidden functions, both literally and metaphorically. One of the Lechia ultras performances (September 2018, match against Zagłębie Lubin) involved unfurling a large football shirt-shaped crowd flag in the colours of the club with the number 12 and the inscription 'Twelfth player' (*Dwunasty zawodnik*); it also sported the crest of the club and the logo of the Lechia supporters' association. The flag was held by fans for a few minutes, until the whole sector started counting from ten to one. Suddenly, some fans wearing balaclavas and gloves (Unknown Perpetrators) emerged around the stand and fired flares. The flag was used as 'camouflage'—those who had flares used it as a cover to change their clothes so that they would not be recognized on CCTV footage. Such practices are a common occurrence among Polish ultras, who use various

techniques of disguise—for example, wearing a paint suit, dark glasses and a mask. Although they do it to avoid prosecution for firing pyrotechnics, the whole 'masquerade' is 'dramaturgical' in nature—there is a twist of action, high tension, disguise and an own definition (or 'scenario') of the situation/reality.

Performances of Polish ultras have—in a sense—a certain potential to disturb the established perception of a particular aspect of reality, especially its official interpretation. Playing games with the law and the 'system' is one of the 'favourites' among ultras fans. For example, Ultras of Broń Radom (the fifth level of competition) decided to 'cheat' security officers by using dry ice and hot water rather than flares to make a smoke effect:

> For this match, we prepared a choreography called 'A climatic game at the top in the Broń stadium' (*Klimatyczny Szczyt na Broni*). Following the trouble with uniformed services we got in after our last show, we decided to give up pyrotechnics and to produce smoke using dry ice and hot water instead. Dry ice is carbon dioxide frozen to minus eighty degrees [Celcius, RK]. In contact with hot water it sublimates, that is, CO_2 rapidly turns from a solid into gas. That's how we produced the so-called heavy smoke. We used 25 kilograms of dry ice and 50 litres of hot water. We were authorized to bring them to the stadium by match organizers. (Pomysłowi kibice Broni Radom 2013)

A member of a graffiti group (painting club symbols and fan motifs in public spaces: on walls, fences, houses, etc.) explains the complicated and risky nature of his activity, which he mainly pursues at night (club from central Poland, anonymity preserved):

> Well, you know, I got caught by the police when I was doing some painting. (…) They wanted to break me; they didn't manage, of course. They had their version, and I stuck to mine. They said there'd been four of us there and all of us were running away, and I said I'd been on my own, I hadn't seen anyone and all that… I'd been on my own and that's it. They drove me home; I had no ID on me. They drove me home and they asked my mum if the name I gave them was real, right? My mum said yes. 'And did your son go out dressed like that'—they say. 'I'm dirty and that's all; I

> just got dirty'—I say. 'Alright then'. And they let me off. Sometimes I walked home in the middle of the night with fucking paint all over me. And I got caught painting an abandoned house. It's a funny story because, you know… We saw a police car nearby; they were just driving around. We were walking out of the gate and the lads started running. And I say 'why the fuck are we running?!' And the police started chasing us; they thought we'd been stealing. We could've just told them some bullshit, like that our friend's doing some renovation. 'And where is this friend?' 'Well, officer, you know, I think he's still asleep; I don't want to… Leave me alone, I'm on my way home', that sort of thing, right? But the thing was that the lads started running. They ran, you know, and I was the last one, right? And, well, I just sort of followed them. The story was that we hid behind some cars and I was the only one that could be seen. There were three of us there, you know; we were three and I was the only one they could see. And then there's this pig coming into the yard. And I say to the lads 'he's going to walk behind those fucking cars and get all of us'. 'Fuck it, then', I say; alright, I walked out with my hands stretched in front of me. But they didn't get the lads; they crawled under a car and stayed there for three hours, under that car, right? It didn't get to anything serious, the whole thing just blew over. The lads had a bit of a laugh; there's loads of stories like that.

The authorities, both football and official, do not tolerate such behaviour and demand restrictive control. After the match between Lech Poznań and Legia Warsaw in 2018, when home supporters threw smoke bombs, broke the fence and invaded the pitch (police intervention prevented a riot; the match finished before time), there were even demands for a ban on crowd flags and giant banners on the grounds that they are used as a cover for people firing flares (Sektorówki znikną… 2018). In Białystok, the authorities of the Jagiellonia football club met with the police to agree on the rules for presenting match choreographies, such as identification of people who hang flags on the fence and presenting the content of flags and banners before the match (Sektorówki na stadionie 2012). On 25 November 2018, the ultras of Wisła Płock issued a special statement (on their Facebook page)—they had been forbidden from bringing their choreography to the match against Lech in Poznań. The

language of the statement shows how much emotion is associated with the preparation of ultras performances:

> What you read here today should be an account of our yesterday's away trip, when we were supposed to present our long-awaited choreography. Thanks to the 'kindness' of the police our show was FORBIDDEN. (…) Although there were rumours that the police wanted to put a particular pressure on this match, we weren't worried because the matches between the two teams attended by supporters of both sides had been really peaceful for a long time. (…) We got information that during a 'special' meeting between the security manager (…) and the police (…) it had been decided that we wouldn't be allowed to bring our large crowd flags and banners into the stadium. This information came as a shocking surprise. (…) In addition, during the meeting a police representative said that if we somehow managed to get any elements of our choreography into the stadium, they would intervene in the stand and confiscate them by force. The same referred to the supporters of the host team. It was an open threat on the part of the police.

One essential feature of performance is that it is unique: it is never the same twice, even if it is repeated in the same place/space. In the world of ultras, choreographies are presented only once. There are some elements which are regularly displayed during matches, such as flags and banners with the name of the group or the club, especially those that are hung on the fence between the pitch and the stand. They maintain the tradition of the group, and their regular display is a means of communicating the ideas and values of the ultras' mentality. For ultras, it is obvious that the next 'demonstration of skills' is different from the previous one. This feature of performance is also noted by Richard Schechner: 'Performances are made from bits of restored behavior, but every performance is different from every other. First, fixed bits of behavior can be recombined in endless variations. Second, no event can exactly copy another event. Not only the behavior itself—nuances of mood, tone of voice, body language and so on, but also the specific occasion and context make each instance unique' (2006: 30).

An account of the 2011 derby played in the Fourth League between Igloopol Dębica and Wisłoka Dębica proves that 'restored behaviour'

can be the case also in fan culture (TMK, issue 11/2011; the report has no title or author and consists of accounts of anonymous fans). Igloopol supporter: 'Preparations started a month before the derby; the fans were particularly involved; we expanded the cage to 738 seats and numbered all the seats in the whole stadium to comply with the regulations' (p. 32). A similar atmosphere is apparent in comments from Radomiak Radom fans on the derby with Broń Radom (published in the same issue): 'It's not a match, it's a derby… You know, preparations, flags, mobilization in many districts of the town. The day before the derby, we turn up in a group of about eighty people to see the training; we hang the banner (…)' (p. 8). In one case, it is even possible to talk about a 'performance' before the match as such: a Widzew Łódź supporter describes preparations for the derby against ŁKS Łódź as follows (published in the same issue of TMK): 'Widzew supporters prepared a show with great fanfare. The ultras were collecting money for the choreography, and special marches were organized in the estates around the city' (p. 8).

The quotes above demonstrate that fan culture is present in the lives and experiences of its representatives; thanks to (repeated) acts of performance they revive it again and again. This has an important dimension for its members: 'It is a triumph of reexperiencing when we believe ourselves to be confronted by a continuity' (Bruner 1986: 12). This continuity is expressed in the slogans of match choreographies: 'We've been here, we are here, we will be here' (*Byliśmy, jesteśmy, będziemy*, Stomil Olsztyn); 'Our story has a perfect order: Korona is the end, the middle and the beginning' (*W naszej opowieści wszystko ma swój porządek: Korona to koniec, rozwinięcie i początek*, Korona Kielce). Such slogans come as proof of the importance of culturally defined chronologies, which, along with other factors, constitute the identity of fan culture. It is quite obvious, however, that presentation of even cardinal symbols and values requires strenuous work and particular attention to technical issues—ultras performances can only be successful thanks to the practical, organizational and artistic skills of individual people involved.

Technicalities of Performances

In a sense, the activity of ultras fans is one situated between craft and art; Tomasz Sahaj (2012) views ultras performances as 'quasi-artistic'. While the former is often associated with having appropriate skills and abilities, the latter refers to a certain form of expression performed using aesthetic means. Being an ultra does not require a degree from the Academy of Fine Arts, but rather sacrifice for a common goal, significant artistic and technical skills, and readiness to present content that breaks standard norms and moral values (a Pogoń Szczecin ultra: 'You can learn everything if you want. Some people make graphics, others paint like fine arts academy students, still others make flags. It's important to try and be active in the group, to encourage one another'; see Wywiad z Ultrasami… 2013). Does it, then, have something in common with art? The difference is that in the case of ultras' performances the author is a collective subject (the group is known by name; its members remain anonymous), and the aim is not to gain recognition in artistic circles or to express the 'creative spirit', but to express something different—emotions associated with the club and the fans. Just as aspiring students of fine arts have to pass entrance exams, prospective members of ultras groups have to meet certain criteria and cannot be immediately admitted. A Hutnik Cracow explains this as follows:

> Of course, our door is open, but the criteria are tough. We have recently accepted two new members who have cooperated with us for well over a year. It's worth noting that as many as five people are in the group from the very beginning. In addition, there is a group of over ten people who work with us on a regular basis (…); the most active of them will probably become our members in the future. If you want to join us you have to be active, you have to be seen around. You need to have a clear vision of what you want to do in the GT [GlobeTrotters'02, the name of the ultras group, RK], what you want to contribute. Of course, regular attendance at Hutnik matches is a must, but it isn't enough. You need to have your own initiative and be creative. (Wywiad z GT'02 2010)

Admission to an ultras group is always subject to recommendation by or invitation from those already involved. Considering that flags and choreographies are the target of attacks by fans of rival teams, their preparation and storage requires trust and confidentiality.

Ultras' craft requires certain specific technical skills, which means that women are a valuable asset to these groups: 'Stitching up a flag, sewing a ribbon on something—ultragirls are always the first to do the job. Putting pieces of cardboard on the seats, cleaning seats, hanging and removing flags, firing pyrotechnics, sewing dozens of banners or 350 flags (!)—it's all the work of girls from Wisła' (Ultra Girls n.d.). A female fan of Arka Gdynia also mentions that her ultras group used the technical skills of women:

> They relied on the girls, because most girls know how to sew things, and we sewed those giant flags or cut pieces of material nice and straight; the guys are all thumbs about that sort of thing. So, in fact we took part in the preparations right from the very beginning. We also did some painting; sometimes we came up with ideas—when they were getting a crowd flag ready we said something like 'perhaps it would look better with something like that on it'. And I always say, just for laugh, that a woman's eye will always catch something. So, in fact it's always been like that, we made them together with the guys. [Arka Gdynia_female supporter]

The multidimensional character of ultras activity is also mentioned by a Wisła Cracow fan:

> It sometimes happens that when we prepare a huge choreography for a few days, some people from our group go home only to get some sleep. We often paint our thing instead of going to a party. Even if we don't prepare any choreography, we have a lot to do. Our activity mostly takes place behind the scenes. Take slaps, for example [small stickers with fandom content, posted in stadiums and in public space, RK]—it seems they're nothing special, but someone has to sort them out and pack them. For example, the latest series was printed in thirty-six thousand copies, and we have new ones all the time. (Najpiękniejsze jest to… 2012)

Preparing a performance requires considerable resources. Although members of ultras groups work for free, the purchase of materials is not possible without funding. This is why it is not unusual to see supporters standing with collection boxes near the stadium, or walking around the stands and asking for financial support for ultras activities. Some groups publish detailed reports from such collections. For example, Lechia Gdańsk fans released the following information on the website of their association:

> During the last two home matches (…), members of Ultras Lechia Gdańsk (…) collected funds for match choreographies. The first match (…) brought 6,521.93 złotys [about 1,600 euros, RK], 6.11 euros, 0.11 US dollars, 21 Icelandic crowns, 110 Norwegian crowns, 0.1 Bulgarian levas and 10 Singapore dollars; during the last match (…) we collected 6,707.54 złotys [about 1,600 euros, RK], 1.91 euros, 3.3 pounds sterling, 50 Swedish crowns, 0.25 US dollars, 5 Swiss francs and 114 Serbian dinars. (Wyniki zbiórek z derbów… 2018)

The total costs of a typical choreography are difficult to estimate, because the scale and the materials can differ significantly. However, it is not a secret that a large choreography which requires large amounts of fabric, dozens of cans of paint and spray-paint, plastic elements, sewing machines, brushes and flares costs at least ten thousand Polish złotys (about 2500 euros). This means that many groups do not present large-scale choreographies very often; an ŁKS Łódź fan points out: 'We present two choreographies in each round, because we are limited by financial resources we have at our disposal. What I mean is we are short of funds' (Kim jesteśmy? n.d.).

Financial limitations result in some inequalities in the ultras culture. Groups from the clubs with the largest base of fans (Legia Warsaw, Lech Poznań, Lechia Gdańsk, etc.) can collect more funds and thus can present better, bigger and more spectacular performances. They gain greater recognition and reputation, which means that more people—impressed by the effect—may decide to make a donation. In smaller centres, limited budget means that it is impossible to go beyond a certain level in terms of form (but not in terms of involvement). The case of the Hutnik Cracow

ultras group shows how much determination is required to make a planned event happen:

> The GT budget [Hutnik ultras group, RK] is based on the sale of Hutnik memorabilia. In addition, from time to time we organize a collection among ourselves when the situation requires. The most demanding financial challenge in our history was the match with Magdeburg in 2010. In the face of the enormity of this event, we decided to take out a loan, a few thousand złotys. Besides, we borrowed money from people, several thousand złotys in total as well. We did it to make the match an event that Hutnik had never seen before. The risk was considerable, but luckily we managed to break even, mainly thanks to good sales of souvenirs we'd prepared for this match. [Wywiad z GT'02 2010]

The situation in Poland is paradoxical. The largest ultras groups are linked with the largest and most renowned clubs. What they have at their disposal is not only great infrastructure (excellent ultras stands and, quite often, storage space on club premises), but also, and most importantly, human resources not comparable to smaller groups. This enables them to produce spectacular choreographies. At the same time, such groups are more exposed to restrictions, since matches with their participation are sometimes classified as 'high-risk' events, and thus draw more attention both from the media and official authorities. On the other hand, ultras from lower leagues do not have such opportunities. Their matches, however, might not have the status of mass events, and hence the clubs do not always have to take extra security precautions, which means that their fans are not subject to restrictive control.

This was the key reason behind the decision of Lech Poznań supporters, one of the leading groups among Polish ultras, to establish their own club called Wiara Lecha ('Lech Lads'), which they entered into the local league. The move had nothing to do with giving up Lech, their home club. Their own team plays in a league which is not subject to such restrictive regulations and security measures as Ekstraklasa (where Lech competes), which means that during the matches fans can fire pyrotechnics, drink beer and behave roughly—they can cultivate a 'real' ultras mentality, unconstrained by any norms, restrictions or moral correctness. As

mentioned above, the word 'ultras' refers not only to the form of expression—choreographies, flags and pyrotechnics—but also to a particular attitude or 'mentality' (Doidge 2015). In many countries, despite local conditions (e.g. the absence of such a clear division between hooligans and ultras as in Poland), fans share a similar passion, emotions and the pursuit of a spontaneous form of conduct (which sometimes breaks moral norms) (Doidge and Lieser 2017). Although this is also the case in Poland, local ultras must take into account not only external determinants (security regulations, stadium infrastructure, etc.), but also internal, environmental ones—as mentioned in the chapter devoted to hooligans, many decisions, including those concerning the content of performances, are taken with the approval of hooligan crews. Being 'free' and 'independent' is therefore doubly difficult. However, despite all limitations, the themes of ultras performances in Poland are multidimensional and raise a variety of issues.

From 'Cursed Soldiers' to Knights in Armour: Themes of Ultras Performances

Jeffrey C. Alexander (2006) observes that cultural performances play a key role in presenting the values of the group. Analysis of ultras performances, then, makes it possible to identify and interpret the principles which are important to fans and provide the basis of their community. It should be remembered, however, that—as Goffman (1956) has shown—the 'presentation of self' is unobjective in the sense that the image of self is styled and is meant to make an impression on the 'audience'. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to state that what can be seen on ultras' flags and in their choreographies does not show all the 'secrets' of fan identity. The strongly masculine nature of this culture—based on the principle of being 'hard', 'tough' and uncompromising—means that presenting content referring to failures or weaknesses is avoided. In addition, ultras performances cannot—understandably—reveal sensitive data: the location of places where choreographies are prepared and stored, or information about illegal activities. Performances also have limitations stemming

from their aesthetic form. Considering that ultras choreographies cannot contain a large amount of information, they feature large images and are meant to make a strong visual impression rather than present a complex discourse.

The culture of ultras is an alternative culture which not only demonstrates its attachment to the club and its tradition, but also manifests its attitude to the world and to the direction in which it is changing. Based on photographic documentation available online and on participant observation, the analysis of support shows presented below offers a typology including eight major subjects featured in stadium performances.

Performances Expressing Collective Identity

The most popular type of choreography highlights the manifestation of the unity and collective identity of the group, and celebration of the idea of the beloved club. While the main objective of such performances remains essentially the same, what varies is their matchday context, thus making the actual content unique. Collective identity is consolidated by means of performances in which fans glorify their own club and its supporters, and at the same time demonstrate superiority over others in general and the current opponent in particular. The latter involves symbolic violence whereby the rival club and its supporters are an object of depreciation, mockery and ridicule. This type of performance relies on a clear-cut division: 'We' and 'You'. For example, fans of Legia Warsaw strongly stress their distinctness and superiority by frequently displaying a banner reading 'We are your capital' (*Jesteśmy waszą stolicą*). Although the slogan emphasizes a fact which has nothing to do with sport (Warsaw is the capital of Poland), it sends a subtle message of supremacy.

Similar choreographies can also be observed in the local context. In northern Poland, two football clubs (Lechia and Arka) from two neighbouring cities (Gdańsk and Gdynia) are fierce rivals for domination and the title of 'The rulers of the North' (*Władcy północy*). A banner featuring the slogan was first displayed by Arka fans. Seized by their opponents supporting Lechia, it was burnt during a match between the two teams, an act of depreciation and profanation of the identity of the rivals.

Moreover, during the following matches, Lechia fans presented their own flag in their club colours with the same inscription. The word 'rulers' points to a characteristic feature that can be observed in a number of choreographies: collective identity of ultras groups tends to stress, at least in symbolic terms, their own hegemony (as discussed above, this has an impact on the type of masculinity presented in choreographies, which is also strongly 'hegemonic'). It is thus hardly surprising that performances repeatedly aim to convince the audience of the 'power' of a particular group. This identity strategy culminates in such slogans as 'Cracovia is Us', 'Lechia is Us', 'Lech is Us' (*Cracovia to My*, *Lechia to my*, *Lech to My*), which not only define the unity of the group, but also associate its members with the symbol of the club (which corresponds with the process of internalization and incorporation described in the previous chapter). Although Polish fans are rarely represented in the ownership structure of football clubs (apart from a few cases in lower leagues, described in the next chapter), the conviction of the power of their collective identity enables their self-perception in terms of 'moral' ownership, which does not have to be reflected in the actual organization.

What needs to be stressed when discussing the collective identity of the groups in question is the importance of performances displaying antagonism. Indeed, the ideology of the Polish ultras movement is based on a radical opposition against different actors, including the media, the police, politicians and supporters of rival teams. At times, the self-definition of fan culture by means of antagonism stimulates the expressive content whose radicalism reaches the verge of interpretative potential, leaving no room for any ambivalence. An example can be provided by a support show displayed by Górnik Wałbrzych ultras: 'We were not brought up to hate, we were brought up by hate itself' (*Nie wychowaliśmy się w nienawiści, to nienawiść wychowała nas*), stressing that their antagonism results from the tradition of, and socialization in, the fan environment. A similar spirit was demonstrated in a Legia Warsaw choreography: 'Ultras—We hate everyone' (*Ultras—Nienawidzimy wszystkich*). Such a radical definition of the attitude to the out-group appears to pinpoint and resolve the problem of collective identity (Antonowicz and Wrzesiński 2009). It would appear that in the fan community there is no border culture forming a space which cannot be enclosed, a space of

post-identity. Thanks to this uncompromising 'differentiation', identity is more easily transformed into self-glorification. On the other hand, however, it means pushing this identity to the extreme limit, as there is no discursive space for being inclusive. To some extent, this attitude creates an ideological trap—hating everyone means excluding any opportunity for external relationships and makes ultras groups even more cohesive and exclusive. Their hermetic perception of collective identity naturally results in establishing the lines of division from 'Others' of different cultures and religious backgrounds.

Patriotic and Historical Performances

The question of identity is also addressed in historical performances, which in fact refer to the contemporary history of the Polish nation. In a way, these involve an extension of group identity and are focused on the nation as an imagined community (Anderson 1991). This type of support show is dominated by a few historical themes, such as the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, featured in choreographies devised by most ultras groups in Poland. Quite naturally, Legia Warsaw fans are the ones who most often prepare performances devoted to the event. In addition, if their team plays a match around the anniversary (1 August), the heroes of the Uprising are invited to the stadium and the Polish national anthem is played. The anniversary performance prepared by Legia fans in 2017 drew particular attention as it featured a huge image of a small boy (wearing a hat with the Polish flag on it) with a Nazi solider holding a gun to his head and the slogan: 'During the Warsaw Uprising Germans killed 160,000 people. Thousands of them were children'. The slogan was in English and the performance became a topic of discussion in the foreign press, which certainly demonstrates how powerful—in terms of gaining publicity—ultras choreographies can be.

Apart from other nationally celebrated historical events, there are also support shows devoted to commemorating events important in the local communities (mostly related to struggle for independence or anti-communist movements). In recent years, an increasing number of historical choreographies have been devoted to restoring the memory of the

so-called Cursed Soldiers (*Żołnierze Wyklęci*), military fighting against both Nazi Germany and, later, against the communist regime in Poland. They became victims of communist repression and it is only today that their memory is being revived, including through such initiatives as erecting monuments and the National Day of Remembrance of Cursed Soldiers. Most of these soldiers were executed by the communist authorities or murdered by the secret police. Although under the circumstances of the post-war communist regime their struggle was irrational and doomed to defeat, they steadfastly pursued their heroic aim. Glorification of the Cursed Soldiers by fans is hardly surprising. Indeed, with their utmost devotion, radicalism, uncompromising 'anti-system' attitude, loyalty to Poland, honourable attitude and sense of brotherhood they ideally fit the description of heroes and role models. A particularly impressive choreography devoted to the Cursed Soldiers was prepared by Cracovia ultras; it featured the faces of six of them, with an inscription on a strip of white and red material (the national colours of Poland) reading: 'An independent Poland was the most important issue for you. Cursed Soldiers, Cracovia will never forget!' (*Dla Was Niepodległa Polska była najważniejszą sprawą. Żołnierze Wyklęci, Cracovia nie zapomni!*). In the world of hardcore fans, where radicalism, physical violence and authoritarian style prevail, appealing to the noble attitude of courage and honour fulfils an important identity need. The men's world of Polish ultras promotes—even if only discursively and symbolically—an idealistic image in which steadfast fighters obeying the principles of honour struggle in the name of noble values, defend local/national soil and bring up young, 'unspoilt' generations.

At this point, it is worth asking what role the community of Polish ultras can play in the shaping of historical policy at the national level. They are mostly excluded from the public debate by both out-group and in-group factors: the mainstream media and their own contestation of the system as such. However, numerous choreographies devoted to the Cursed Soldiers have certainly had a considerable impact on collective memory and contributed to their inclusion in the mainstream historical narrative. In this context, the concept of 'imagined community' can be coupled with the 'invented tradition' approach (Hobsbawm 1983). The patriotic/nationalist content of choreographies refers to historical facts

and events, which are, however, freely interpreted and serve to establish a vision of nation and culture that is desirable for fans. Political performances represent the 'ideal type' which does not require nuanced interpretations or consideration of problematic issues (in the case of the Cursed Soldiers, the ultras always show only their positive, heroic side). Such a refined ideal is a perfect pattern to incorporate into contemporary fan culture—it fits the militant and highly cohesive character of fan groups, which are based on physical strength. The world presented in choreographies evokes a community which has never existed but which can be invented and glorified thanks to aesthetic form. As many of them are truly spectacular (smoke, pyrotechnics and a voice of hundreds or thousands of people), the sense of might seems to be natural. Historical and national topics correspond perfectly with the high emotional energy and war-like atmosphere of the ultras stands. Some ultras feel united both with their own group and the idea of struggle for the great patriotic 'cause'.

Anti-communist Performances

Unlike in a number of Western European countries, stadium performances of Polish football fans do not make use of leftist symbols or the rhetoric of 'class struggle'. Indeed, Che Guevara, the hammer and sickle, portraits of Stalin (used by, e.g. Livorno fans in Italy) or anti-capitalist slogans (St Pauli) are not to be seen in Polish stadiums (Woźniak et al. 2019). What can be observed involves a class dispute expressed by means of a set of symbols of protest stemming from national–Catholic ideology, including the heroic and tragic struggle against the German and Soviet occupation. Polish fandom is characterized by radically anti-communist attitudes and regards the leftist agenda—even if developed today—as simply 'communist'. Add to this the fact that a great majority of Polish fans cultivate strongly conservative, traditional values (both in moral and economic terms; see data from qualitative studies: Kossakowski and Besta 2018) and one can readily understand why 'anti-communist' means 'anti-leftist' for Polish fans.

Thirty years after the change in the political system, the ultras persistently display anti-communist banners which are uncompromising in terms of their style and symbolism. Anti-communism is understood as anti-system opposition against the world of political, business and liberal elites. For example, in one of their anti-communist choreographies, Lechia Gdańsk ultras presented a giant crowd flag featuring a few top officials of the communist party hanged from trees. The flag was highly criticized in the media for using means of expression utterly unacceptable in democratic discourse and for inciting violence. Polish ultras consciously adopt the attitude of 'outsiders' and 'deviants', allowing them to break all limits: declaring that they 'hate everyone', they release themselves of any obligation to consider the feelings and attitudes of their opponents. In this discourse, there is certainly no room for any dialogue and 'Other' can be presented in any way. This would seem to explain why Polish ultras meet with so much criticism from the liberal left, which is deeply attached to dialogue and compromise between different identities. However, fans take no notice of the opinion of the out-group and go against the tide of political correctness (the motto of Millwall fans, 'No one likes us, we don't care', fits perfectly here; incidentally, it is also used by Lech Poznań ultras).

The motif of punishment for traitors of the nation was also clear when Lechia fans presented a crowd flag with the image of General Wojciech Jaruzelski (responsible for the introduction of martial law in 1981) burning in the fires of hell (with the devil pointing a trident at him) and an inscription reading: 'You sold the nation and hell will take you' (*Za naród sprzedany, piekło cię pochłonie*). Looking back, it is worth mentioning the match between Lechia Gdańsk and Juventus Turin (the Cup Winners' Cup) in 1983. As the local supporters shouted 'Solidarity' and 'Lech Wałęsa' (he was present at the stadium), communist-controlled public television jammed the broadcast to prevent the anti-system message from reaching the audience.

Performances on the Leftist Agenda and Current Politics

Performances devoted to political issues have become the voice of the ultras and are a very interesting type in terms of form and content. Performances of this kind are not always politically correct and their message concerning both home and foreign affairs can be treated as the voice of a certain proportion of Polish society which will never be heard publicly in mainstream politics owing to the rules of political correctness. For ultras their uncompromising identity is manifested in sharp, often mocking, sometimes scathing choreographies. It has become an integral part of the ultras culture and, to quote Anthony King's work on hooliganism, 'it added to the excitement of a Saturday afternoon, that fans could indulge their often fanciful notion that they were somehow beyond the pale and, therefore, a threat to society' (King 1997: 585).

A number of ultras performances have raised political issues, including such examples as uneasy diplomatic relations between Poland and Lithuania (Lech Poznań vs Žalgiris Kaunas: 'Lithuanian peasant, kneel down before your Polish master', *Litewski chamie, klęknij przed polskim panem*) and hasty naturalization of foreign players before the Euro 2008 championships ('Roger, you will never be Polish', *Roger nigdy nie będziesz Polakiem*), referring to Roger Guerreiro from Brazil who was offered Polish citizenship only to play for the Polish national team. Uncompromising attitudes which often go beyond the limits of political correctness have also produced such performances as 'Jihad Legia' (in Arabic-style lettering; Legia Warsaw vs Hapoel Tel Aviv) and 'Faggotry forbidden!' (*Zakaz pedałowania*), which refer to the concept of 'normal' males that should be able to protect their nation from internal and external threats. The latter are conceived as threats both to the notion of 'nation' (Islam and transnational organizations) and 'authentic' masculinity (homosexuality). They stir resistance manifested through fan rituals and performances also because they are perceived as part of hegemonic transnational political projects. Displaying such attitudes seems to correspond well with the findings published in the volume *Resistance Through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson 1993). Interestingly, resistance to political

correctness characterizes not only Polish but also Croatian ultras. Andrew Hodges (2019: 143) writes how the latter explain the use of controversial words and symbols: 'a parallel was drawn with the use of far-right symbols in that such words "forbidden", therein reinforcing the desire to use them (…). Others relativized the meanings of the words, individualizing their interpretation (…). A third argument, (…) is that such words are not used referentially, but as a placeholder or generalized insult designed to direct insult against specific figures (…)'.

Polish ultras strongly reacted to the so-called refugee crisis. They demonstrated their extremely resistant attitude with the popular slogan 'Stop the Islamization of Poland' (*Stop islamizacji Polski*), displayed in a number of stadiums across the country. With their anti-refugee choreographies, ultras became involved in the current political debate and manifested their group identity at the same time. Śląsk Wrocław ultras prepared a large choreography featuring the image of a knight in armour (with the logo of Śląsk on his shield) 'defending' the European continent against the Muslim invasion from the sea. The image was accompanied by the slogan: 'When the Islamic plague is flooding Europe, let's stand in defence of Christianity' (*Gdy Europę zalewa zaraza islamska, stańmy w obronie chrześcijaństwa*). This performance included important elements of fan attitude: militant character, religious background and firm attitude towards Others. It is important to add that anti-leftist and pro-national tendencies are reinforced by references to Christian motifs. One of the most significant performances in this context was a choreography prepared by Legia ultras: an enormous crowd flag featuring the face of Christ (covering two levels of the ultras stand), accompanied by the inscription 'God save the fanatics' (*Boże chroń fanatyków*), made it obvious what kind of spiritual support is important for ultras.

It is important to observe that since anti-immigrant feelings are shared by a considerable proportion of Polish society, ultras' performances do not seem to express an isolated opinion. The latest public opinion polls indicate that over half of the population is against accepting immigrants from the Middle East. However, such a manifestation helps the ultras (and a wider group of fans as well) to highlight their liminal status and re-assert the traditional notion of the male duty to defend the territory and socio-cultural order against the external enemy.

Hatred of communism leads to a rejection of leftist values. This can be seen in such slogans as 'Good night left side' (in English), and crossed-out images of Che Guevara (treated as a symbol of the left) or the hammer and sickle (a symbol of the Soviet Union). When it comes to more modern leftist–liberal values, Polish ultras radically oppose identity policies of ethnic or sexual minorities. For example, Lech Poznań ultras presented a banner with the slogan: 'The Lech Poznań stadium and fans—the last bastion of freedom in the city frazzled by the leftist paranoia' (*Stadion Lecha i kibole—ostatni bastion wolności w umęczonym lewacką paranoją Poznaniu*). The term 'leftist paranoia' referred to the fact that the mayor of Poznań had taken part in the local March for Equality and voiced his support for the rights of the LGBTQ community. Polish fans are strictly conservative when it comes to moral issues (see Kossakowski and Besta 2018) and use the medium of performance to promote their own values, sometimes in a very uncompromising way. For example, Obra Kościan ultras prepared a rather small banner with a crossed-out image of a gay couple having sex and two inscriptions: 'Faggotry forbidden' (*Zakaz pedałowania*) and 'A Boy and a girl—A normal family' (*Chłopak, dziewczyna—Normalna rodzina*). Such homophobic messages are related both to conservative values that most fans cultivate and to the male character of fandom in general. Heterosexual manhood excluding any 'ambivalent' aspects is reflected in many ultras' choreographies.

Performances on Masculinity

Analysis of ultras activity reveals that their performances are based, to a large extent, on images of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), characterized by such features as domination, physical strength and heterosexual/anti-homosexual attitudes (for more details see: Kossakowski et al. 2019). A few types of male role models presented in ultras' performances are described below.

One very common topic and symbol is the figure of a 'muscular fighter'. Indeed, ultras' choreographies frequently include symbols of muscularity, toughness, physical strength, combat skills and the ability to confront enemies in a fight. In this context, the key audience is other

men, hooligans and ultras. As presented, the figure of 'fighter' often wears boxing gloves and raises his arms in a gesture of triumph; he also frequently wears a mask, as in a Korona Kielce choreography (which also included a banner with the name of the local hooligan crew 'Young Boys Hooligans'). Being 'tough' is not only an image presented to rivals but also a model to follow. A choreography devised by Ruch Chorzów ultras seems to be a perfect example—it included two slogans: 'Hooligan factory' (*Fabryka chuliganów*) and 'We form the spirit, we harden the body, and we change boys into brave men' (*Kształtujemy ducha hartujemy ciało a chłopców zmieniamy w odważnych panów*). Young male fans, then, have to develop and demonstrate proper skills to protect themselves and defend their homosocial group.

The next type of performances consists of strong overtones of involvement in criminal/illegal activity. The most committed fans tend to adopt the rules of prison subculture. For example, Lech Poznań ultras displayed a two-part choreography including two banners saying 'Never give up' (*Nigdy się nie poddawaj*), featuring boxing gloves, and 'Never plead guilty' (*Nigdy się nie przyznawaj*), featuring an emoticon with a fastened zip instead of the mouth. The performance made a reference to both the 'militant spirit' and the principal rule of all football fans: they are not allowed to cooperate with the police under any circumstances. As a result, even those who become victims of violence refuse to make any statements in the course of an investigation. As discussed above, the world of hardcore fans is penetrated by organized criminal groups. Since the principal rule is 'Never plead guilty', it is hardly surprising that these groups try to use this structure to pursue their own aims. Cooperation with the police is regarded as the greatest disgrace of all. Those who engage in it become ostracized and are subject to symbolic degradation, often expressed in vulgar terms. In one such case, a Legia Warsaw fan who decided to testify as a protected witness in a trial involving fans is not only still held in disgrace, but also regularly degraded on banners displayed in stadiums, denouncing him as a 'slut', 'bitch' or 'prison punk'. On the other hand, those members of the fan community who find themselves in prison not only remain part of the 'family' but also receive both practical (assistance to their families) and symbolic support from other fans. The latter type involves flags and banners displayed in the stadiums reading 'Greetings to

prison', most often abbreviated as 'PDW' (*Pozdrowienia do więzienia*), and including the nicknames of fans who remain behind bars—a standardized message used in this context across the country.

Such content not only reflects actual criminal activity but also serves as a tool for creating a symbolic image of deviance. For example, fans of Motor Lublin made a lapidary comment on what they think of the growing concerns expressed by mass media about the 'dark side' of football fandom. They displayed a giant choreography featuring the image of a masked skull in a cowboy hat, and a banner reading 'Bandit city, bandit club' (*Bandyckie miasto, bandycki klub*). Criminal motifs stress men's traditional loyalty to one another, even in extremely difficult situations, and remind everyone that football fandom is an extreme hobby for tough men who may well risk their freedom for their club. Even if it is more of a myth than a reality, it makes a vital contribution and reinforces the macho image of football fans.

References to historical heroes, military ethos and duties of manhood also include chivalric motifs. Knights and kings are presented as men of strong physical constitution, which fits the macho image of ultras. Alluding to the world of chivalry, the ultras want to glorify physical and symbolic violence by evoking battles for honour and dignity rather than mindless and savage scuffles. Chivalry perfectly fits a more complex identity project in which males are the rulers and conquerors with physical strength, exceptional combat skills and great leadership potential that predestines them for the supreme role in society. One such example is a show prepared by the ultras group of Cracovia, who wanted to celebrate a long-standing friendship between the fans of three football clubs, Arka Gdynia, Cracovia and Lech Poznań, an alliance called 'The Triad'. They displayed a huge crowd flag with three horsemen in combat formation, each of them wearing a football shirt of one of the clubs. The 'royal' and 'knightly' air of this presentation boosts the sense of uniqueness and majesty, but also appeals to the noble principles that make the victory more important.

In this context, an immense choreography devised by Cracovia ultras is emblematic. A giant crowd flag covering the whole sector in the stadium featured two mounted knights in full armour attacking their opponents—the knights wield shields with the crossed-out crest of Wisła

Cracow, the local rival (the show was performed during a derby match). The accompanying inscription read 'Defenders of the Holy Land' (*Obrońcy Ziemi Świętej*), which stressed that the 'knightly' ultras defend their city against 'enemies' who claim the right to 'rule' Cracow. The ultras of GKS Bełchatów, in turn, presented a giant banner with two knights whose shields bear the date 1977, the year when the club was founded; there was also an inscription, 'Guardians of tradition' (*Strażnicy tradycji*). The use of the figures of knights and kings helps to connect ultras activity with the historical identity of the club and the region. In such 'historical' performances, however, there are no female figures, and only men can be the rulers and 'noble' knights.

The promotion of the motifs connected with 'fights', 'battles' and 'honour' is strengthened by a vision of fandom as 'brotherhood'—another category of performance related to masculinity. This category fits perfectly with the concept of 'homosociality' (Lipman-Blumen 1976), as it concerns the separation of a male world and symbolic and moral values related to this enclave. Here, a homosocial bond means that there is no need to consider other (female) points of view, and thus 'brothers in scarves' (a common notion describing football fans in Poland; club scarves are one of the most important items of fan paraphernalia) can indulge themselves and 'feel themselves' outside of social conventions. Fandom itself appears as a realm of strongly collective activity that builds a sense of togetherness through love and passion for the club. But all such ultras' performances refer to males only, and the absence of women is not a surprise, since they are often stereotypically seen as a force which interferes with the idea of 'true male friendship', or is even potentially hostile to it. The strength of male bonds is manifested in two ways. First, by presenting fans outside the context of sport as best mates who hang out together and drink beer. Drinking alcohol together—at least in the Eastern European context—symbolizes a high level of trust (it is also an important component of fan culture, e.g. in England; see Pearson 2012). Second, the brotherhood between fans—and often also between clubs—is conveyed through the image of a firm handshake, a very simple but also powerful symbol of unity that holds a strong message.

It is important, however, to stress that homosocial bonds between fans have no homosexual character. Moreover, with an anti-leftist,

hypermasculine and traditional system of values in place, homosexual relationships are viewed with the greatest contempt, and attributing a homosexual orientation serves as a means of denigrating opponents. Being gay or acting like a 'soft', 'female' character is a sign of weakness. As fandom is built on many dichotomies of 'we' vs 'they', being gay means being the next category of 'Other'. Michael Meuser writes about 'two interconnected features of homosocial settings on which masculine identity is founded: distinction from the world of females that is often devalued, and conjunction with other men' (2004: 397). In the context of Polish ultras, this statement has to be somewhat modified—apart from devaluation of women (most of all in terms of their value as fans), even more crucial is the distinction from homosexual men. Since devaluation of both women and gay men serves as a frame for identity development, being an ultra is synonymous with 'not being like a woman' and 'not being like a gay'.

Therefore, rivals are often presented as fundamentally weak, 'female' subjects who not only stand no chance in a physical confrontation, but are sexually exploited on the assumption of being in homosexual relationships. One such performance featured a crossed-out image of a male pair engaged in sexual relations and the slogan 'Gay pride on the visitors' side' (*Po stronie gości parada równości*), suggesting that there were many (or only) gay men among the visiting fans. This explicitly homophobic content aimed to suggest that the rivals engage in gay sex among themselves. As can be seen, then, along with emphasizing the 'weak' hooligan skills of the opponents, attributing a homosexual orientation to them is an important factor in terms of denigration in ultras culture. And it does not really matter whether their orientation is homosexual or not—labelling them as 'gay' seems to be powerful enough and amounts to a grave insult. Homophobic content tends to appear more often in chants, as it is easier to scream or sing than prepare banners and flags. In the Polish context, homophobic chants serve as a tool of denigration of almost any enemy: rivals from opposite clubs, speakers in the stadiums, policemen, politicians, journalists, and so on. As a discursive tool, homophobic chants make a significant contribution to the building of the gender identity of ultras as 'real men'.

Extremist Performances

The above examples indicate political contexts dominant among Polish ultras. It also needs to be stressed that sometimes their political 'incorrectness' leads to extremist messages, which beg the question of legal limits for stadium expression. What remains certain is that racist incidents are far less frequent than they used to be in the 1990s, when skinheads made up a sizeable proportion of the fans. This is an effect of a civilizing change fostered not only by legal regulations, but also by the evolution of the supporters themselves (Kossakowski 2017). Although today there are no performances which make direct reference to racial hatred, flags with the Celtic cross can still sometimes be seen, mainly in small stadiums in lower leagues. For example, in the context of the migration crisis, the fans of Piast Żmigród (the Fourth League) presented a choreography including the Celtic cross and the slogan 'Poland only for Poles' (*Polska tylko dla Polaków*).

The ultras sectors sometimes also becomes a venue of anti-Semitic performances, indirectly but clearly referring to the Jewish origins of the opponents with an intention of discrediting their value. A radical example of such a choreography was one displayed by Resovia Rzeszów fans (level four in the league system) featuring the slogan 'Death to the humped noses' (*Śmierć garbatym nosom*) and an image of a Jew wearing a blue-and-white-striped kippah, the colours of the local rival club, Stal Rzeszów. However, an outside observer might have associated the colour theme with the outfits worn by the prisoners of German concentration camps. The Jew is used as an emblematic figure of the 'Other' which can be used as an insult in an act of symbolic degradation. This symbolic mechanism can be observed in Łódź, where supporters of the two rival local clubs (ŁKS and Widzew) call each other 'Jews', and in Cracow, where the fans of Wisła are notorious for their malicious comments on the Jewish roots of Cracovia Club (co-founded in 1906 by members of the Jewish community). Although anti-Semitic flags and banners are a rare occurrence in the stadiums (probably because of the penalties involved), both cities have a large amount of graffiti aiming to stigmatize the opponents by associating them with Jewishness.

Anti-modernization Performances

The above examples illustrate a preoccupation with particular concerns which arise from the local aspects of a certain strand of Polish culture. Considering that Polish football and fans have not yet become subject to global flows, Polish ultras' performances rarely make reference to the slogan 'Against Modern Football' in the sense used in Western Europe (Numerato 2018; Webber 2015). Unlike fans in Western countries, their Polish counterparts do not protest against the increasing commercialization of football mainly because there are no private investors comparable in scale to Arab sheiks or Russian oligarchs. Most Polish professional clubs are owned and managed by local municipalities or entrepreneurs and match attendance is rather low. They are not successful at the European level of competition and are generally not subject to intensive commercialization. Most Polish stadiums are half-empty and the atmosphere would often be even worse without ultras. However, in recent history there have been some cases of fan protests against 'modern' football.

The conflict between Legia Warsaw fans and the owner of the club is one such example. Having bought the club (in 2004), the ITI media group (the owner of a large television company, a web portal and a chain of cinemas) tried to use the policy of 'pricing out' in order to replace the ultras with 'new', 'consumer' fans (Antonowicz et al. 2015). Following a few months of heated conflict, including a boycott of the matches by the ultras, the fans reached an agreement with the owner and returned to the stadium. In 2008, at the time of the dispute, Legia supporters displayed a confrontational giant crowd flag featuring two figures of fans ripping apart the logo of the ITI company; as the flag was unveiled further apart sideways, the orange letter 'T' in the middle was actually split revealing a huge red heart with the logo of the club in it. The entire performance conveyed the message that the fans are able to 'rescue' the depth of symbolic value hidden under the surface of commercialism. Indeed, the message was also stressed by a banner reading 'Our passion knows no limits. The power of love destroys the power of money' (*Nasza pasja, która nie ma końca. Siła miłości niszczy siłę pieniądza*).

Although ultras groups occasionally manifest their contempt for the UEFA and its policy, they are driven mostly by the local context (as in a Legia choreography presenting a giant banner with the UEFA logo, featuring a pig wearing a euro-patterned suit in the centre, and accompanied by the words 'Because football doesn't matter. Money does'). For Polish fans, 'modern sport' is associated mainly with the increasing penalization of, and draconian fines for, spectator misconduct in the stadium (and is thus a matter of Polish regulations rather than the impact of a global 'modern' tendency in football). Hence, anti-modernization performances mostly concern the passion of the ultras which the authorities decided to ban. In reaction, ultras groups manifest their protest against this policy. The use of flares became a local Polish symbol of resistance against modernization, and the ultras regularly include them as a means of aesthetic expression (Antonowicz et al. 2016). The significance of pyrotechnics could be seen in a choreography presented by Lechia Gdańsk ultras, a giant crowd flag featuring a group of fans wearing club colours gathered at a table with a display of an array of pyrotechnic devices; the masked man in the centre opens up his arms in a gesture of invitation. While the composition was a reference to da Vinci's 'Last Supper', the accompanying slogan, 'Take this, all of you, and burn it' (*Bierzcie i odpalajcie z tego wszyscy*), alluded to the Words of Institution of the Roman Rite Mass ('Take this, all of you, and eat of it'). This example also proves that even in illegal, anti-system shows, Polish ultras refer to traditional symbols and metaphors well embedded in Polish culture.

All of the abovementioned examples clearly demonstrate that ultras' performances are a prominent means of displaying the cultural and moral values to which fans are devoted. These values refer to historical roots of national heritage, patriotic and nationalist attitudes, a traditional and conservative approach to gender and family roles, reluctance to embrace progressive politics, stress on physical strength and 'the law of the fist', and uncompromising and politically incorrect behaviours.

Stealing the Flags and Symbolic Humiliation of Opponents

As presented above, fan performances, making use of flags, choreographies and banners, serve a number of purposes—from glorification of one's own beloved club and fan identity, to expression of political ideologies. They are undoubtedly a testimony to the most important values and identity axes of fan culture. Anna Zawadzka even believes that the symbols used by fans mirror Polish culture (2014), which, however, seems to be a significant exaggeration: it should be remembered that fan groups are specific in their structure. Although people who function within them are different (in terms of their education, gender, age, etc.), they are not representative (although they promote values and symbols recognizable in a broader context). Choreographies have enormous importance for the ultras groups, and those that refer to the colours and symbols of the club have a 'sacred' character. It is no wonder, then, that they are the target of attacks by fans of rival groups. One of the most important practices—apart from the display of match spectacles—is thus seizing and destroying the flags and banners of opponents. This is sometimes reminiscent of medieval battles, in which capturing the opponent's banner could have a decisive impact on the course of the encounter, and certainly disgraced the side which lost it. Analogies to the times of knights have already been described in studies devoted to football fans:

> Aversion and fear of public opinion, exaggerated self-esteem, anti-intellectualism, the role of heraldry and chants, (…) emphasis and pathos—here are some of these parallels. Others concern (…) dependence of the individual's position on 'combat skills', the role of friendship, background, neighbourhood and common activity in strengthening group identity, similar sense and character of initiation rituals (…). (Milcarz 2006: 70)

Fans also talk about such analogies and mention some examples from history:

> Flags are a source of pride. Their number and quality are a sign of the value of the fans. Flags glorify not only a particular team, but also the housing

> estate, the district, the town or the city of their holders. (…) Flags of hostile clubs are also the most valuable trophy. Seizing flags goes back to times immemorial—in the film *The Knights of the Cross* [*Krzyżacy*, a Polish blockbuster from1960, RK], we can see how the capturing of the Polish standard boosted the morale of the Teutonic side during the Battle of Grunwald [1410, also known as the (First) Battle of Tannenberg, RK]. Today, seizing flags is also popular among scouts (…). And it is quite the same among fans. Seizing a flag of a hostile team is a source of pride for any fan. They are usually captured in skirmishes in railway stations and in the streets. Sometimes they are stolen from storage rooms in the clubs, where they are left after the match, but this practice is seen as dishonourable in the fan circles. What commands the greatest respect is snatching a flag from the fence in the stadium. (Flagi n.d.)

As discussed in the previous section, ultras fans sometimes refer to chivalric motifs in their choreographies, showing supporters as knights defending club colours and their own region. At least in theory, supporters follow a code of conduct (e.g. the 'Poznań Pact', described in Chap. 3), which could evoke the analogy of the chivalric ethos. In reality, however, the matter is much more complicated—the obvious pathos and glory of flags (and chants) is one thing, but following the 'ethos' in everyday encounters is quite another. There are many examples in the fan world in which groups are accused of dishonourable conduct.

There is no universal agreement among fans as to what circumstances make the seizure of the opponents' flags 'honourable'. Most of them would probably agree that it is dishonourable to snatch scarves from people other than the most engaged fans—ultras or hooligans. Those who are not involved in the fan scene—in fan slang, those who 'don't dig it' (*nie kumają*) or 'don't know much about things' (*nie są w temacie*)—and thus cannot be treated as potential legitimate targets include children (and their parents), elderly people, women, people with disabilities, and the so-called picnic fans.

One example is the situation from 2013: Ruch Chorzów fans surrounded a supporter of Śląsk Wrocław carrying a flag which, when unfolded, turned out to belong to the Club of Disabled Supporters—the attackers left it untouched. In some cases, however, the unwritten rules

have been broken: in 2012 Arka Gdynia fans attacked parents and their children playing in a Lechia Gdańsk youth team: the victims were stripped of their scarves. Arka supporters' association denounced the attack and distanced themselves from the perpetrators.

Fans waving flags in national colours bearing additional elements (most often inscriptions) identifying a particular club can also expect a neutral attitude. In 2017 supporters of Raków Częstochowa (the second level of competition) seized the flag of the Hungarian club Diósgyőr, which was in the national colours of Hungary. Raków fans announced (via social media) that they would return it to Hungarians.

The most controversy, however, surrounds incidents in which the most engaged fans are robbed of their flags by their fierce rivals. The greatest achievement is to snatch them during a match between the two teams. At present, however, such situations tend to be rare and only occur in lower leagues. In Ekstraklasa, First, Second and even Third League games, the risk of attack by rival supporters is quite low—most stadiums have a CCTV system or a sufficient presence of security personnel. Sometimes, however, there are the so-called kamikaze attacks (a term used on fan forums)—a lone supporter decides to run from his own sector and tries to get the flags of the rivals. Such attempts, however, are rarely successful: the attacker is caught by security guards (on or next to the pitch), withdraws when faced by a larger group of opponents, or turns back when the rivals take their flags off the fence to protect them. Cases such as that during the Zawisza Bydgoszcz vs Jagiellonia Białystok match in 2013, when a guest supporter broke through the line of security and snatched a flag which belonged to the hosts, are the exception confirming the rule (the 'kamikaze' was caught halfway back to his sector and the flag was returned to the owners).

Under the circumstances, fans have to look for other opportunities to seize the 'holy' symbols from their rivals. Most such actions involve an attack on the way to/from the match (if the targeted group has no police escort), tracking people who store flags and sometimes carry them on their own (or take insufficient precautions), and above all, tracking and attacking locations where the ultras prepare their choreographies or store their paraphernalia. The last of these tactics is more frequent than others

and stirs up the most controversy—there is a fine line between what is considered honourable and what is dishonest and seen as theft.

One such recent case was the seizing of GKS Katowice supporters' flags by their local rivals from Ruch Chorzów. The press wrote about a raid of masked Ruch fans on club premises; the incident involved beating security staff and several GKS supporters working on their choreography, and smashing a dozen or so doors (see Pietraszewski 2017). Fans from Chorzów presented their version of events in an 'official statement' released on a fan forum:

> We got info that GKS ultras were preparing their choreography in the stadium. When we got there, some of them were outside taking a break. We followed them when they were getting back in. The GKS guys who were inside didn't take up the fight; they fucked off and hid in different places around the building. One of the ultras didn't manage to run away; he got a kicking and of his own free will he gave away the secret place where GKS flags were hidden. We opened the room which he told us about and we got the possession of forty-four GKS Katowice flags. As explained here, it was a typically hooligan action. There were GKS ultras guys, active fans, on the spot. As for the version presented by GKS fans, their revelations—which have it that the incident was just a typical burglary—are a lying manipulation aiming to minimalize the greatest defeat in their history. (Oficjalna relacja PF&WSH 2017)

GKS Katowice supporters, in turn, claimed that the incident amounted to a breach of the rules generally accepted among fans. It is difficult to clearly resolve such disputes, because the key principles for each group of ultras are 'honour', 'respect' and a sense of self-esteem, so each party involved defends its own version at all costs.

Seizing flags brings glory to the conquerors, and being robbed of them is a source of great shame to those who have been unlucky. The 'trophies' are destroyed in a humiliating show in the public space, ideally during a match between the two teams. After their successful raid, Ruch fans could not do this with GKS Katowice flags, because at that time (spring 2017) their clubs played in different leagues. This explains why they chose alternative options. One occasion was the last match of the 2016/2017

Ekstraklasa season against Górnik Łęczna. Although the choice of game may be surprising, it was in fact the last one played by Ruch in the top league, so the fans wanted to make it special. Later, they also hung and burnt their 'trophies' in one of the main streets of Katowice. Their spectacular action caused serious traffic problems and could be watched—and recorded—by people not related to the supporters' movement.

Legia Warsaw supporters, in turn, boasted their success in the stadium. During the match with Jagiellonia Białystok in March 2014 they presented the flags they had seized from their opponents eleven months earlier—their extraordinary raid became known as 'the action of the century'. Taken by surprise while working on their choreography, Jagiellonia supporters lost several dozen of their most important flags and banners. Legia fans knew exactly where they were stored and when to attack, which means that they must have spied on their rivals for a long time. As both clubs played in the same league, Legia fans tormented their rivals for several consecutive games—they displayed their 'trophies' turned upside down and burnt them.

In some cases, the loss of flags, especially if it is spectacular, has some organizational consequences. At the end of October 2018, fans of Lech Poznań were robbed of seven flags on their way back from Szczecin (match against Pogoń). Those who seized them were fans of…Widzew Łódź. Again, this story comes as proof that such actions are planned for weeks and are not carried out on the spur of the moment. The attackers must have known how their rivals transported their flags, who was responsible for them and how to set a trap without risking confrontation with the police. Following the incident, the Ultras Lech'01 group—not only one of the first Polish ultras crews but also considered top-class in Europe—was dissolved. In another case of this kind, fans of Śląsk Wrocław faced even greater consequences. On their trip to the European League match in Seville in 2013, they were attacked and robbed of several flags by the ultras of FC Sevilla—Biris Norte group. As a result, the whole Śląsk supporters' association was dissolved. Their defeat had an additional dimension: while Biris Norte is a group with extreme left-wing sympathies, Śląsk ultras are attached to right-wing values. In fact, many ultras groups in Poland stressed that the incident had a broader meaning. However, the Sevilla story of Śląsk fans was not over at this point. Hoping

to take revenge, they have been travelling around Europe following FC Sevilla in European Cup competitions for several years. This demonstrates the level of commitment that supporters are willing to make in order to regain their 'holy' objects and self-esteem. The fact that club colours have a 'sacred' dimension is confirmed by one of the 'commandments' devised by Śląsk fans:

> The colours of Śląsk are our highest value. Our honour is to defend and glorify them with dignity in the world. By wearing them, you represent not only yourself but all of us. Anyone whose behaviour brings a disgrace to our holy colours must remember that serious consequences will follow. (Z dekalogu kibica Śląska… 2013)

The crest of the club and its colours are 'cardinal' symbols, the key elements of what Erving Goffman called the 'central component of culture' of a given social group (1974). A form of culture in which the tradition of the coat of arms is central—as is the case of supporters—can be classified as 'residual' (Eagleton 2000). Such a form can be considered archaic in the context of modern and dominant forms, as it refers to values which these forms assess as anachronic. There is a paradox here: residual cultural forms strongly stress identity, and the 'identity politics' is an important feature of contemporary cultural and political approaches, in which various—mostly minority—identities struggle for recognition (Lilla 2017). This struggle, however, takes place in a situation in which the predominant social diagnosis assumes the impermanence and relative nature of identity as such. In the case of supporters, however, identity is considered something permanent that continues even if other qualities lose their importance. Dominant culture—whether thanks to discursive (media and progressive philosophies) or legal tools (restrictive laws)—attempts to 'modernize' such 'archaic' forms, especially if they seem to reach for violent practices, or seem to be 'inadequate' for the requirements set by mainstream actors.

The more progressive actors do not call for 'civilizing' fan behaviour and identities in the sense of referring to a certain form of modern rationalism, which postulates the rejection of all old customs in the name of following the path of Reason (see Szacki 2011: 42). Rather, it is about

following the 'post-modern' trajectory of behaviour and normativity, in which the rights of individuals are the key, and group identities, if they appear, have a momentary and variable form and should not 'impose' any limits on individuals (Bauman 2008). The fourth chapter presents how 'tribal' behaviours of fans are defined in terms of 'deviation' by individuals who admire other cultural forms. Meanwhile, supporters are dead serious about their tradition: they risk health and legal consequences in attacking their rivals' symbols or defending their own. They do this acting in accordance with a collective social consciousness that characterized traditional communities described by Emile Durkheim (1997). At the heart of this consciousness is the Club, a residual universe.

The rules of the fan world impose some prescriptive obligations and include sanctions for breaking them. Sanctions for losing flags punish failure to protect and defend 'sacred' objects—a supporter is forbidden to desecrate symbols or expose them to risk. The 'sacred' takes overall precedence: 'On trips to away games you represent Lechia. Remember to represent it with dignity' (Regulamin wyjazdowy… 2014). Although this rule is somewhat general, it includes everything that is important for fans: the Club—the 'holy' idea essentially defining collective emotions. Offending these feelings means offending the common consciousness, and thus, in a sense, is an insult to its transcendental content. Profanation of symbols, then, such as the colours of the club, is the most severe offence.

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7

Activism, Collective Action and Supporters' Associations

The issue of football fan activism is one of the most current topics in international sociology of sport (Millward 2011; Numerato 2018; Hodges 2019; Cleland et al. 2018). Fans who are involved in various initiatives for the sake of the club are called 'active' (Cleland 2010), 'activists' (Kossakowski 2017a) or 'new activists' (Grodecki 2018a). This category is mainly identified in terms of contrast to 'consumer fans' (Giulianotti 2002), whose activity is limited to the consumption of club products—the purchase of tickets and souvenirs. 'Active fans' engaged in initiatives aiming to reinforce the influence of supporters on managing the club are described as 'stakeholders' (García and Welford 2015). The 'shareholders', in turn, are a particular category of 'stakeholders' (ibid.): they are fans who are formally involved in club governance. In this classification, joining a supporters' association (aiming to incorporate fans into management or to undertake other community actions) is an important moment of transition from a 'passive' to an 'active' fan.

The emergence of fan activism is related, as Jamie Cleland notes, to wider social changes, that is, the transformation of the economic system from industrial to post-industrial. This change brought an increase in the number and significance of the middle class, which had an impact on

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traditional relations with clubs, characteristic of the working class. The process fostered more prosumer attitudes (fan magazines and websites devoted to issues related to the club) and an increase in civic support for club issues, apparent in the emergence of supporters' associations (Cleland 2010). Transformations in football, which go hand in hand with the commercialization of the social world, have influenced fan reactions; in some cases, their dissatisfaction and anger have stimulated protest actions. This was the case, for example, in England (e.g. protests by fans of FC Liverpool and Manchester United; see Millward 2011), and in a broader European context this inspired the Against Modern Football campaigns (Webber 2015; Numerato 2015). Undoubtedly, the widely understood changes in football—commercialization, mediatization, legal restrictions—have stimulated fans' collective energy. As a consequence, 'collective action' has become one of the key terms in the analysis of fan activity (Cleland et al. 2018).

In the case of fans, 'collective action' can be understood in broad terms. In the most fundamental sense, it is a community experience of cheering, singing, reacting to situations on the pitch and travelling together. In a broader sense, collective action concerns a multidimensional space of activity. For example, numerous types of fan initiatives address local problems and take an institutional form (Cleland and Dixon 2014; Millward 2011). Many of these new forms of activism have been explored by researchers: protests against high ticket prices (Doidge 2015), legal restrictions (Brandt and Hertel 2015) and the relocation of clubs (Fitzpatrick 2013), resistance to club ownership changes (Brown 2007; Millward 2011), campaigns against changing the name of the club (Hayton et al. 2017) and activities for the local community (Totten 2015). 'Collective action' results from the domination of community spirit over the individual interests of specific fans. In contemporary culture, characterized by individualism and identity 'crises', football fandom creates an extraordinary kind of collective world in which the interest of the club and community prevails. 'Collective action' is based on human resources and social capital of groups of fans.

All forms of fan activity mentioned above 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' (Touraine 1965: 74). His observation provides an adequate interpretation of football supporters who, for example, take over and revive their beloved clubs. 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 has to be collective, given a fundamental rejection of the idea of a single, 'alien' club owner, which means that supporters have been able to take such responsibility only as a group.

In an analysis of the social action of fans, the key element is not the individual members of the group (although charismatic personalities certainly play a role), but mutual relations between them. This makes it necessary to consider 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 institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 14). The collective aspect of these relationships is even more important in the context of such hermetic groups as football fans, characterized by a limited trust in 'outside' structures: the police, political authorities or the media. It is for this reason that the social capital of fan groups is mainly of the 'bonding' type (Putnam 1993). On the one hand, their collective identity is rooted in a shared consciousness and system of values, referred to as cultural capital, with the core element being that of the Club, perceived as an autotelic value, a 'symbolic universe'. On the other hand, this identity is consolidated in the course of repeated interaction rituals (Collins 2004) and 'collective emotional experience' (Cleland et al. 2018: 33) boosting the 'community spirit'. This makes it easier to mobilize the resources of group members in situations which require, for example, organizing a trip of a few hundred or a few thousand supporters to an away match or preparing a street protest. This would not be possible without the ability to activate such extraordinary social capital. Apart from 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 they were equipped with the technological resources required (Coleman 1994: 302).

In the case of football fans, social capital is definitely collective in nature. As described in Chap. 2, supporters' groups have a structure

(characterized by cohesion, punitive norms, strong control, hierarchy, loyalty and trust) which enables the generation of extraordinary social capital, important for collective actions. Such capital, 'created spontaneously for the purposes of fans of rivalry and supporting the local football club is also used in other domains of social life. It is transferred both in the organizational form, helpful in achieving collective goals out of the original context (illegal activities, but also social and charity actions) and in the form of particular relations which benefit the fans in their private lives' (Grodecki 2018b: 144). In other words, social resources allow supporters to undertake a wide variety of activities, both in an institutionalized and an informal way. Illegal and hooligan activity ('the dark side of the terraces'; see Grodecki 2018b) has already been analysed in Chap. 3, as have been some examples of protests (Chap. 4) and ultras activity (Chap. 6). This chapter is devoted to other examples of supporters' activity which go beyond the 'natural' context of supporting the local team. In order to provide a more comprehensive picture of their social activism, it is worth returning to the history of Polish fandom and evaluating the process of institutionalization of supporters' activity in the form of associations.

The Roots of Supporters' Associations

The institutionalization of the movement in the form of supporters' associations, a trend which emerged in the first years of the twenty-first century, contributed to the development of ultras' performances described in the previous chapter (the first association was established by Wisła Kraków fans in 2001; see Grodecki 2018b). The change was important considering that ultras shows became increasingly more complex and complicated, and required close cooperation with club management in terms of logistics (installation, mounting, storage on club premises). Institutionalized groups also facilitated the raising of funds for choreographies, whose costs often exceeded tens of thousands of złotys. Indirectly, the ultras introduced formal structure to the community of football supporters. As a result, the fan movement went on to discover different areas of activity outside stadiums and became a part of organized civil society

(Grodecki 2015). Naturally, fan associations included not only the ultras, but also those responsible for charity actions, contacts with the club and so on.

The first decade of the twenty-first century brought a rapid and significant evolution of the fan movement. It should be noted that this was the period of Polish accession to the European Union (in 2004). The opening of borders resulted in increased emigration from Poland (estimated at the level of up to two million people), which affected the world of fans. A Górnik Konin (the Fourth League) supporter says: 'The town is depopulating at a high rate, the wave of emigration is rising. In addition, it has painfully affected our group' (*Działamy na własny rachunek* 2014: 39). However, the most important date marking a change of the football field in Poland was 18 April 2007, when Poland was selected (together with Ukraine) as a co-host of Euro 2012. While modernizing the country's stadiums and highways, the Polish government decided to also 'modernize' supporters, mainly by ousting football hooligans from the game. The 2009 amendment of the Act on Mass Event Security was to serve this purpose. As a result, the number of those arrested for offences related to this act increased significantly. Established in 2007, the National Union of Supporters' Associations (Ogólnopolski Związek Stowarzyszeń Kibicowskich) intended to integrate fans in the struggle for their interests (and was institutional proof of their integration). Importantly, the integration of supporters' associations stemmed from the impact of external processes (changes in legislation, transformation of stadium infrastructure) and deepening structural processes of state-building.

The experience of the conflict with the government (along with the growth of the ultras) was instrumental in expanding the activity of the fans. Consequently, their organizational skills manifested during the protests against authorities were to be used in other fields. The energy of collective identity has been used in new dimensions: first of all, in the expanding area of activity of supporters' associations, which initiated the next stage in the historical process of fandom—involvement in the sphere of social, educational, political and charitable activity. In the 2018/2019 season, all sixteen teams playing in the Polish Ekstraklasa (level 1) had their supporters' associations. Local groups of fans also had a representative in the management structure of the clubs, holding the position of

Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO). Implemented through the efforts of the Polish Football Association, SLOs are further evidence of the impact of modernization and civilizing factors (they are an international phenomenon connected with UEFA Club Licensing regulations; see Stott et al. 2020). In most clubs, the position is held by a person from the fan community. Clubs can cooperate more easily with the fans when they are represented by an institutional body (association). The activity of associations facilitates a number of issues (e.g. organizing the distribution of tickets) and, above all, enables their expansion in other spheres. It needs to be stressed that the civic and social development of supporters' associations reflects a broader context, where a number of different organizations create their particular identity policies in contemporary Poland (the number of new associations and foundations established in the period between 2003 and 2005 was 4000; see Machowski 2010). This would seem to confirm that the fan movement (in terms of associations, as well as mobilization and activity) is developing into a social world capable of reaching particular aims and objectives in a modern and official way. The multidimensional sphere of fan activism reflects the fact that

> In the course of the growing differentiation and integration of social functions and increasing democratization and equalization, the people involved have forced themselves and each other to behave with greater consideration; consideration of the feeling and interests of more people, for more of the time. (…) The level of their mutually expected self-restraint has risen. (Wouters 1986: 11)

The broadening of the field of fandom beyond typical 'supporting' actions stems from several motivations—the respondents indicate such factors as the intention to demonstrate the positive side of fan activity, to break the stereotype of the 'hooligan' and 'thug', to use the energy and potential of the group, to work for the sake of the Club, to raise the new generations of fans, to strengthen ties in local communities, to create attitudes and values and, in a broader sense, to serve others (as one member of GKS Tychy supporters' association mentioned: 'We just want to help').

Summing up the reasons for the formalization and institutionalization of fan activity, Jacek Burski points out such factors as facilitating the decision-making process (in the context of long-term goals and one-off mobilization), the need to engage in dialogue with other actors at both local and national level and taking responsibility for communication on behalf of all supporters. Institutionalization of the movement also improves the potential of putting pressure on clubs (Burski 2013: 276). Supporters had to learn new, 'democratic' rules, without which it would be increasingly difficult for them to organize their current activities (Grodecki 2018b). If one adds to this supporting ultras activities, coordination of various protests, organization of charity and patriotic campaigns, and rescue and management of the clubs, it is clear that supporters' associations are characterized by 'broadband activism', described in the following paragraphs.

Fans also thought that they should formalize and institutionalize some aspects of their activity:

> […] od dawna już rozmawiano o tym, by stworzyć organy mające własną osobowość prawną, jakąś organizację, zarząd, wtedy można z kolei otrzymać oficjalne akredytacje, można przystępować do oficjalnych rozmów. Na pewno takie stowarzyszenia były potrzebne. (*Ludzie przestaną nas…* 2011: 44)

> (…) people had been talking about it for a long time, about setting up some bodies with a formal status, some sort of organization and a board. This would give us an official status; we could become involved in official talks. There's no doubt that there was a need for such associations. (*Ludzie przestaną nas…* 2011: 44)

As the Polish state and society had been undertaking a rapid process of modernization, the fan movement faced the challenge of 'normalization':

> Everything began to get normal; such things like tickets; it got impossible to get tickets in any other way than through the club administration or fan association. And that's why associations had been established: to normalize everything. [Górnik Zabrze_Supporters' Association]

Over time, supporters' associations as well as informal fan initiatives have started to develop a range of activities going beyond fan issues. The 'civilized' aspects of social activity of the fan movement include such dimensions as: (the list includes the names of some clubs whose fans have been involved)

1. Charitable activity
   (a) collecting and preparation of food supplies and everyday items for foster care institutions, nursing homes, animal shelters, and the Polish minority population in the former Soviet Union (Legia Warsaw, Lechia Gdańsk, Widzew Łódź, GKS Katowice, Resovia Rzeszów and many more);
   (b) collecting funds for a variety of actions: medical treatment of those in need (children and adults), the purchase of rehabilitation and medical equipment (Arka Gdynia, Legia Warsaw, GKS Tychy);
   (c) donating blood (Wisła Płock, Zagłębie Lubin).
2. Social and educational activity
   (a) helping in the redecoration of foster care institutions (a nationwide campaign called 'Colouring' (Kolorujemy));
   (b) organizing sports tournaments and fairs for children (the Supporters United programme described in the following sections);
   (c) organizing Christmas parties for children from foster care institutions, the homeless and the elderly (ŁKS Łódź);
   (d) organizing football tournaments for supporters (KKS Kalisz, Ruch Chorzów, Wisłoka Dębica);
   (e) organizing art competitions and educational classes for children (Cracovia Cracow, Arka Gdynia, Polonia Warsaw);
   (f) organizing summer camps for children from foster care institutions and from the Polish minority population in the former Soviet Union (Wisła Kraków, Lechia Gdańsk);
   (g) preparing officially authorized graffiti in urban space (clubs all over the country).

3. Commemorative and political activity
   (a) commemorating important figures in local sport (Legia Warsaw, Ruch Chorzów).
   (b) commemorating important events in Polish history (e.g. the Warsaw Uprising, Lech Poznań, Legia Warsaw, Pogoń Szczecin);
   (c) renovating and taking care of the graves of people who rendered service to the region and the country (Lech Poznań);
   (d) participating in events celebrating local and national holidays (fans all over Poland).
4. Institutionalization
   (a) official status of supporters' associations as public benefit organizations.
5. Integration
   (a) integration in terms of an institutional body—the National Union of Supporters' Associations (representing the fan movement in official affairs);
   (b) integration as the field of multisector cooperation—the Supporters United programme;
   (c) integration in terms of social mobilization and grass-roots activity (supporting fans of rival clubs, solidarity between 'enemies').
6. Fans' political economy
   (a) production, management and making a profit from fan culture (fan brands, merchandise, fan shops).
7. Normativity, regulations and 'fans codes' ('formalization of conduct')
   (a) the 'Poznań Pact' and the 'Fan Code';
   (b) internal regulations of individual groups—rules of conduct during the match, both home and away (e.g. obligation to wear club colours).
8. Communication and publishing activity
   (a) editing and publication of fan magazines;
   (b) setting up and administration of websites.

9. Rescuing football clubs
   (a) undertaking, especially in recent years, many actions and campaigns aiming to rescue failing clubs (Grodecki and Kossakowski 2019; Kossakowski 2017b; some examples are investigated below).

Apart from the above activity incorporating fans in a broader—civic—context, what must not remain overlooked is controversial, often 'uncivilized' and illegal dimensions:

1. Hooligan activity and vandalism (fights between hooligans, damage to public property)
2. Political extremism (displaying illegal political symbols, e.g. associated with racism)
3. Criminal activity (engaging in drug trafficking, robbery, organized crime)
4. Violation of legal regulations concerning the matches.

There is, however, some criticism concerning the activity of supporters' associations. Some negative comments even come from fans; for example, the editor of a fan magazine states that:

> Their [associations'] main goal is to raise funds, to get money; they are not only looking for sponsors, but also receive a lot of money from local governments. [Editor_fan magazine]

In addition, some active supporters have recently recognized motivation problems among fans, and some associations find it difficult to recruit new members.

While it is certainly necessary to note the co-existence of positive initiatives with the 'dark side' of fandom, it seems that the development of new, legal and culturally and socially acceptable forms of activity is a symptom of the civilizing process in the fan world (or a large part of it). In the days when it was dominated by hooligan incidents there was no space for cultural and 'civilized' forms of fan activism. However, the interdependent relationship between state-formation processes, modernization and Europeanization of Polish football (Euro 2012, modern

stadiums, professional league) and a maturity of a part of the fan movement made it possible to implement new, unprecedented platforms of inter-sectoral cooperation. The Supporters United programme—investigated below—is an inspiring example.

Supporters United: A Programme of Multisector Cooperation

The evolution of the fan movement has coincided with the modernization of Poland, a dynamically developing large European country. In the field of sport, a symbol of joining the modern Western world was Euro 2012 and its organizational success. Political changes do not occur in a vacuum—they greatly depend on changes in society, economy and sport. Therefore, the possibility of implementing such a project as Supporters United' (SU) emerged only when both the fan movement and government agencies had become mature enough to work together. A coordinator of the programme in the PZPN remembers that this required time and change:

> We are faced with social changes … The most serious problems we had with the fans was in the 1990s, after the political transformation (…). It seems to me that it all occurs naturally … the process of civilizing this whole movement. Civilizing in the sense of—most of all—departure from just any political radicalism and violence in its pure form as a particular feature of fandom. And this process continues…

The idea of Supporters United draws on the German experience of Fanprojekte. It was implemented as a pilot project by the PL.2012 company, which was responsible for the organization of Euro 2012 in Poland and coordination of projects related to the tournament. Supporters United was first launched in two cities: Gdańsk and Wrocław (June 2010). Each centre employed people with a background in the fan community (Lechia Gdańsk and Ślask Wrocław, respectively). After Euro 2012, the project (referred to as a 'programme' from 2015) was taken over by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism. The ministry was able to

ensure a more stable organizational and financial support and developed the strategy of its further expansion. Over the following years, the next centres were established in Gdynia (Arka football club), Warsaw (Polonia), Tychy (GKS), Poznań (Lech), Zabrze (Górnik), Kielce (Korona), Legnica (Miedź), Lublin (Motor), Białystok (Jagiellonia), Chorzów (Ruch), Szczecin (Pogoń), Bełchatów (GKS), Nowy Sącz (Sandecja), Opole (Odra) and Mielec (Stal). In 2019, there were seventeen local centres operating across Poland.

As of today, Supporters United is a coalition of several entities which are different in terms of their activity and legal status. Apart from the Ministry, the PZPN and supporters' associations, the programme also involves local governments. Municipalities provide the premises (often at a preferential rate), and partly finance the salaries of coordinators. Each local centre employs two people; the salary of one is financed by local authorities, and the other by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism. The principles of the project specify the profile of coordinators, including such features as an ability to work in a group, ease of networking and good skills in English; in addition, one of them is supposed to be recommended by the local supporters' association. This requirement appears to be crucial—considering the hermetic structure of fan groups, a 'stranger' would not be able to perform this role effectively.

The significance of the programme for fan culture can be estimated at several levels. Local centres are a chance for a revival of fan movement and drawing new members to local supporters' associations. In order to build identification with the club, local SU centres must educate new generations of fans, and thus undertake numerous actions in schools and at children's festivals. The Polish league cannot compete with its counterparts in Spain, England or Germany, which is why such programmes as Supporters United may become an important asset in building relationships and identification with the club. Although it is difficult to estimate the time required to achieve this goal, some effects in terms of attracting new fans have been noted, for example, in Legnica:

> We always get a response when we announce that we collect something for the kids, it's fluffy animals, or toys, or sweets; fans come and ask if we need help. (…) Certainly since then, since last year, there's been a greater flow of

> fans who come and show their interest. Sometimes they call and say 'I know a friendly gentleman who has a shop and sometimes he asks: "Listen, I've got fruit juice, I have water, if you need"'. And he brings it, a hundred litres. And it's his idea, he can see that … and it's the same with a lot of people. It's not that there aren't any of them at all; there are. And there are more and more of them every year, every event; there are more fans. [Legnica_Supporters United]

Supporters United enables fans to tap into a new form of resource: support from the local authorities and the football association. The decision to cooperate with official institutions appears to be a stage in the natural development of the fan movement.

> This movement has evolved, it really was inevitable if we wanted to develop further. Every supporters' association and every fan involved has to realize that in order to go one step higher … to attract more people and encourage … or, let's say, to organize events or actions on a wider scale, it's obvious we need different partners. [Gdynia_Supporters United]

A member of Śląsk Wrocław supporters' association indicates that cooperation with external actors can help in the implementation of various undertakings and should not be rejected on principle. The limit of acceptance is related to the level of independence that fans should maintain: 'As soon as someone who gives the funds to operate SU centres starts to set some conditions, that you have to do this or that, and some kind of independence will be over, cooperation with the centres will probably be over as well'. The question is: How to define the 'conditions'? The SU programme is based on the institutional principles of both the Football Association and the ministry, so fans have to—willingly or unwillingly—adjust their actions. Therefore, cooperation with institutions requires a compromise and partnerships—essential reflexivity to deal with the 'conflict of interest'. This makes it possible to strengthen the 'power for action' and makes this action 'collective'.

Statements from various respondents cooperating with the fans include such terms as 'credibility', 'trust' or even 'surprise'—especially in the case of people who do not know fans and do not know what they can expect

of them. Gaining credibility is crucial for fan activism (and for the whole movement in general), and it is much easier thanks to a wide partnership. Local centres cooperate with different organizations. In Legnica, they include the local college of higher education (collecting school supplies for children), the Fitness Centre (sports activities for children), a bowling alley, the Youth Centre of Culture, and the Sports and Recreation Centre. The situation in other cities is similar: Poznań—the Museum of the Wielkopolska Uprising; Warsaw—the 'Odra—Niemen' association (assistance for Poles living in the former eastern borderlands). The Gdańsk centre is supported by various organizations: the municipal sport and recreation centre, primary schools and the Gdańsk Centre for Preventing Addiction. The situation is quite similar in Gdynia, where the SU centre cooperates with the Club of Disabled Supporters, and, most importantly, with a large number of primary schools. The Centre organizes a campaign called 'Yellow and Blue starting kit' (school supplies for children). In addition, a campaign called 'Yellow and Blue Santa Claus' aims to help children's hospital wards. Yellow and blue are the colours of the Arka club, and the gifts for children, both in schools and in hospitals, are designed with club colours. On the one hand, these are charity initiatives, but on the other they promote the club and the supporters' centre.

Going beyond the area of 'pure' fandom activity (although this is still an important part of the work of associations and fan projects) is a sign of development, marking the first steps in the area of civic activities. Fans are aware of bad publicity they receive, and hence charity actions help to change their image among the public.

> It probably started from clearing our image, really, and showing that a fan is not just a thug or hooligan from the stadiums. I think that after some time people just got to like this effect, the feeling at the final moment of an action, seeing the joy of the people we help, so that now people themselves want to do things, they come to us, they come up with ideas. We have a lot of requests for help, raising money … And I think that it's precisely because of this positive PR for fandom and that it has become a part of fandom … In the past it was different. Now it's so cool that we have our power, and we are really able to use it to help better than many other organizations and foundations. [Gdynia_Supporters United]

Owing to their negative image in the media, fans strive to achieve a positive reputation. They face a difficult task, because 'you can perform dozens of good actions and then there is a riot, and the media write about it, and all the work gets ruined. It's like getting up over and over again' [Wrocław_Journalist]. The activities, the quality of which is visible to outsiders, convince others that fans are not people from pathological environments:

> It seems to me the fans are becoming a fully-fledged partner to talk with the city. It's not like 'the hooligans come and we won't talk with them'. It's fans who come, who have carried out some programme and they made it; it worked out, so maybe we start to cooperate. [Warsaw_Supporters United]

> To show that they are not bad. That apart from the fact that they got labelled as good-for-nothing, just fighting all the time, or something … just to show they are normal people who can come and help, that you can rely on them and if they have an opportunity, they will get something done. [Legnica_Supporters United]

The narratives of fans indicate an awareness of their situation, reflexivity, an capacity for self-evaluation and assessment of the outside world. This also shows the evolution of fandom. A few decades ago, the fan movement did not care about the opinion of others and did not consider compromise to be appropriate. Aggression and violence were the only type of relationship with others. In contrast, today there are not only attempts to pursue joint activity, but also signs of aspiration to be like others—'normal' members of the community. Civil and charitable activities do not so much completely change the image of Polish football fans as significantly expand its scope. As one journalist mentions, this is the 'bright' side of fan activity. But there is also the 'dark' one, hidden as if 'behind the scenes':

> There are some interactions behind the scenes, with those who will never come into the spotlight, never talk to a journalist. And those 'backstage' people, I suspect, they have a lot to say behind the scenes in these associations. We can call them, conventionally, militants. It seems to me that they … are a nuisance, because they are just, well, from some crime-related

> circles, connected with intolerance, and also with drug trafficking or violence. [Gdańsk_Journalist]

The programme can lower the level of antagonism, as antipathy gives way to the willingness to engage in dialogue and the need for common working meetings. It requires reflexivity in the approach to others and to own attitudes:

> When it comes to Supporters United, when we go somewhere, we look neutrally at the others. Someone might not like Lech Poznań, but we won't talk about club animosities, but rather about the organizational matters; we make suggestions where to arrange some action; we don't tend to look at each other with hostility. (…) We know that if we needed any help, to learn something, it wouldn't be a problem to get in touch with someone else. [Kielce_Supporters United]

The SU centres, as well as supporters' associations, complement the 'spontaneous' bonding social capital of fans, which—although essential for rapid mobilization of resources—is insufficient to pursue serious projects involving financial support and legal conditions. While the institutionalization of their activity enables further development and new relations, at the same time it preserves the independence and cultural patterns of the fan movement.

The case of Supporters United certainly demonstrates that the world of Polish fans is changing. This, however, does not mean that it has evolved into a social movement free from violence and discrimination. As presented in previous chapters, the hooligan wing seems to be strong, with many 'crews' fighting illegal battles. The fact that the league stadiums are safer cannot be explained only by fans' projects but also by restrictive law, effective police procedures and surveillance systems (Antonowicz and Grodecki 2016). Still, the scale of infiltration of criminal organizations into fan groups is an open secret. It appears that the 'bright' side of fan activism—charity, social campaigns and the cases described above—does not constitute the 'core' or majority of the fan movement. Most fans are typically engaged in their 'usual' activities: attending matches, drinking beer with other fans, purchasing club paraphernalia and so on. However,

what needs to be stressed is that initiatives like Supporters United can play an important role in enabling slow and gradual social change. It should be clearly emphasized that the unprecedented nature of the programme makes it necessary to limit too far-reaching or very ambitious requirements for the local centres. What is at stake is not a thorough transformation of fandom in Poland over the next few years, but a patient building of a new culture of supporting, starting from its peripheries.

To the Rescue: Supporters and the Revival of Football Clubs

It is important to remember that even if many areas of fans' activity do not seem to be connected with clubs or fans and football as such, fan activism is in fact possible because there is a common platform for all their initiatives. It is thanks to love for the club that these people come together, create bonds and experience a sense of belonging. They visit a foster care institution to bring toys or sweets because they have met at the matches of a particular club. Although this does not mean that people who love football are not able to devote themselves to charity actions outside the context of the game, in many cases being a supporter has facilitated social activism (or, on the other hand, promoted an aggressive, hooligan attitude). The club is therefore an important starting point, and it is strengthened by emotions experienced by fans in relation to it. In some cases supporters experience a difficult situation—their club has significant problems or collapses and they have to deal with this challenge. Below are some examples of cases where Polish fans were required to take action to rescue or revive their beloved clubs.

Cases of rebuilding or rescuing clubs by fans are not only a Polish phenomenon. Recently, most attention has been devoted to the activism of English fans in this domain (Cleland et al. 2018). The top English league—thePremier League—is considered the forerunner of commercialization, mediatization and structural transformations in the world of football, as well as in the context of the transformation of fandom. The logic of changes has an impact on clubs from all league levels, as shown

by the example of both renowned clubs from the highest divisions (AFC Bournemouth, Portsmouth or Swansea; see Keoghan 2016), as well as those from lower leagues, for example Northampton Town (Lomax 2000) or Exeter City FC (Treharne 2015). There also detailed and multifaceted studies of Manchester United fans who decided to establish their own club just after the new American owners had taken over their traditional club (Millward 2011). In this context, the struggle for the club has been perceived in terms of defending the local community, which the club is part of (Fitzpatrick 2013).

Polish cases need to be considered with attention to local contexts. In the British context, many clubs have experienced the extreme challenge of meeting expectations and requirements related to commercialization and keeping a high level of sports performance. Some clubs were unable to cope with the challenge of market rivalry. In order to compete with the top teams, they have to sign high contracts with players, which can lead to chronic debt, sometimes with disastrous results, as illustrated by the fate of Glasgow Rangers and Portsmouth FC. Since the Polish league is not so 'challenging', in most cases the collapse of a club stems from poor management or old-fashioned structure. Until the systemic transformation which began in 1989, all Polish sports clubs operated under the patronage of state-owned companies or public institutions (e.g. the police, the army). After 1989, market logic resulted in the break-up of relations particular to the socialist economic model and forced the clubs to look for other financial resources. Suffering from the lack of sufficient external resources, some of them declared bankruptcy.

The existing studies (Grodecki and Kossakowski 2019) show that in the post-1989 period there have been eighteen cases where fans were engaged in rescuing/rebuilding football clubs, some of them with a long history and a record of success: national champions (Polonia Bytom, Widzew Łódź, Szombierki Bytom, ŁKS Łódź, Polonia Warsaw) and Polish Cup winners (Lechia Gdańsk, Zagłębie Sosnowiec, Zawisza Bydgoszcz). In each case fans engaged all available resources, but what proved the most important was their social capital and collective 'spirit'. Below are three examples of such cases: Lechia Gdańsk, Chrobry Głogów and Hutnik Kraków. At the moment, Lechia Gdańsk is a limited company with a German-Swiss consortium as a majority shareholder; financed

by private capital, the club plays in the Polish Ekstraklasa (level 1). 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 Third League (level 4). Although all three clubs have survived thanks to considerable involvement of their supporters, each of them is currently following a different path.

Lechia football club is an important element of local identity for many people in Gdańsk. 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, 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 or business organizations 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 live up to expectations and Lechia found itself in the Third League. 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, Lechia was left only with the training team, a few managers working on a voluntary basis and a group of talented junior players. As decided by the Polish Football Association, the club joined the competitions of the so-called A-Class (level 6). With almost 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. Turnout of Lechia supporters at away matches was unprecedented for this level of competition nationwide. One of the websites devoted to the club sums 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. There was a hope that there would be a new opening, a start from scratch, from the Sixth League, the lowest in the history of the club. (*Z historii Lechii Gdańsk* n.d.)

The club urgently needed money for current activity, as emergency assistance from the most devoted fans did not guarantee any stability. Stories about local businessmen who brought plastic bags with cash to pay for renting the pitch or to buy jerseys and shorts for the players have become a legend. One of the supporters recalls 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 twenty thousand złotys [at some point, monthly expenses of the club amounted to about ten thousand złotys, RK].

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 staff, which meant that the club had their organizational assistance and was able to save some money. 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.

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 had a guarantee of stability and met formal requirements for an Ekstraklasa licence. With organizational issues resolved, it was now possible to attract sponsors and investors. The club moved to a new stadium with a seating capacity of 44,000. In 2014, the majority of shares (57%) was taken over by a German-Swiss consortium.

What, then, is the position of supporters in the club? When the company was originally set up, Lechia was an association and some shares were allocated to its current members. The company statute allowed a new strategic investor and gave him the right to a decisive vote in matters concerning investments and finance. However, the decisions involving club *imponderabilia* (such as the change of its colours, logo, location or core activity) require an absolute majority, which, considering the presence of fan shareholders, is almost impossible. In this way, the forty-six

people with a fan movement background became 'the guardians of tradition' who have both a symbolic and legal right to defend the club 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 are preserving cultural capital for future generations.

In many ways, the developments in Chrobry resemble the Gdańsk story: in both cases a disastrous financial and organizational situation elicited an active reaction from the fans. Based in the town of Głogów (population of 70,000), Chrobry is not among the greatest of clubs. 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 choreographies and flares. Towards the end of 2006, it turned out that the club had a debt of approximately one million złotys and the players had not been paid their wages. January 2007 saw an unusual show of civic activity from 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 fifty 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, 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.

The new 'fan' management changed all the locks on the club premises the day it was elected. In the first year, they faced problems previously impossible to imagine in professional football:

> There were no pens or paper, 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. [Chrobry Głogów_supporter]

What made it work at the organizational level was social capital, that is, the network of relationships between the fans. Because the club was in debt with 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 forces: they provided Chrobry with financial support, helped to rebuild it in the organizational sense and restored the trust of the local public. Just like in Gdańsk, the mayor of Głogów noticed these efforts and decided to finance the running expenses of the club.

In 2012, the club was transformed into a limited company. It was quite unusual to see approximately 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 a fan background wore their club scarves while addressing the council on the occasion. Like Lechia, Chrobry became a professional sports organization requiring professional management. Supporters who still work in the club do so because of their legal or managerial skills and not purely because of their emotional involvement. Fans who provide support for 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. 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.

Nowa Huta, a district of Cracow, the second largest city in Poland, takes its name from large steelworks, built by the communist authorities

in 1949. Hutnik Cracow sports club was established following the initiative of its employees. The greatest period for the 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 UEFA Cup (where they played against such teams as AS Monaco). It seems paradoxical that the best season in the history of the club marked the beginning of its demise. Nowa Huta steelworks, the main sponsor, was privatized but the state authorities did not make provisions obliging the new owner to support the club. Hutnik management had grown 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 downhill in the sports hierarchy. In the middle of the 2009/2010 season, it turned out that the players had not been paid for months and the club was six million złotys in debt. 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', 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. The 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, recalls the difficulties of the early days:

> It was a really difficult thing to do and even today it's hard to believe that we managed to do so much. (…) It was an association which had just started, which had no resources, which had only begun to accept its first members. The task ahead was 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. Apart from this, there were also the costs of hiring a stadium and a training pitch, and buying the equipment. It was our success that we got people interested and they were generous with their money.

Although the club has some local sponsors, membership fees are an important component of the budget: approximately 150 members pay a monthly contribution of 100 złotys (about 25 euros). The entire management team work on a voluntary basis and their main principle is not to overspend. Matchday revenue is an important source of funding, but it depends on the cost of renting the stadium and on the 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 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 stimulates grass-roots activity.

Since 2016, the club managed by fans has functioned under the traditional name, Hutnik Kraków. Today, the fans no longer have to deal with the burden of the past and can focus on the development of the club (e.g. they reactivated the handball section). The most important question that arises in the context of a football club like Hutnik is where the 'glass ceiling' is in terms of sports development and how far such a club—managed only by fans—can get in terms of league competition. 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.

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 clearly connected to the commercialization of football. As yet, Poland has not experienced economic exclusion of certain categories of supporters, such as the working class, from the stadiums. We have not lost the social spirit of community to a commercial show.

Apart from the cases discussed above, it is also interesting to note that of Górnik Zabrze, a fourteen-time Polish champion. When it was revealed that the club has a debt of 40 million złotys (with its annual budget at the level of 14 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 started 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 only traceable over the last few years. While 'socios' as a form of club structure is well-known in Spain, in Poland there is only one more such case aside from Zabrze—the Socios of Stomil Olsztyn, established to provide financial support to this club (Grodecki 2018a). The future will tell whether such activity will become a lasting element of Polish football.

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Conclusions

The last three decades have brought considerable changes to Polish fandom culture. Football fans are a social group whose modus operandi has reflected changes of post-transformation Poland. It can be said that the modernization of the country has left a strong mark on fans, although it is unjustified to view them (or any other social group) as inert actors whose fate has been determined by external factors. The world of supporters is evolving, and one can see how supporters' groups and their members use opportunities created by the new institutional democratic order. On the one hand, they pursue their activism, creating another civic community. On the other, their specific structure (whose roots go back to the pre-1989 period) enables efficient use of their resources for illegal activities.

It is difficult to predict the future of the fan movement. Certain trends, such as open violence in stadiums, are no longer possible on a larger scale. State authorities have done their homework, primarily in terms of legal regulations and police procedures. Polish football understood as a larger system can boast a modern infrastructure where—also due to the most up-to-date technological equipment—there is no room for 'barbaric'

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behaviours of the most ardent fans. It also seems that Polish society has undergone a great (civilizational) change. Sensitivity to violence and aggression is much higher today than at the beginning of the democratic transformation, when the level of anomie and socio-economic uncertainty was unprecedented. The broader modernization processes take place despite the existence of extreme groups in the Polish political landscape. Poland has become—also thanks to its accession to the European Union in 2004—a country with fairly similar characteristics compared to other European countries. In addition, Polish football is trying to keep up with other European leagues, even if the Polish league level seems to be very far from the best leagues, for example the 'Big Five' leagues: Spanish, English, Italian, German and French. The entire football-related environment—media coverage, procedures, adjustment to the regulations of European football authorities, training system—does not differ significantly from the situation in other European regions.

The socio-demographic cross-section of supporters' groups is also changing. New generations entering the stadium have less and less to do with the former extreme, violent, aggressive and pathological 'spirit of the stands'. In the course of the study, many experienced fans active in supporters' associations emphasized that it is increasingly difficult to recruit young people willing to engage. On the one hand, they have many more alternatives in terms of spending their free time (incomparably more than what was generally available in the 1990s and 2000s); on the other, people growing up in new, post-transformation times have other priorities and opportunities. The culture of social media is beneficial to fandom culture in some ways—it enables, for example, presentation of ultras performances to global audiences (Doidge et al. 2020); it also makes it much easier to establish contacts with fans of other clubs (domestic and international). At the same time, however, social media consumes young people's attention and energy.

One important question is whether the 'civilizing process' of social environment, the growing social sensitivity, makes this type of culture—based on an aggressive attitude towards others, a strong hierarchy and lack of democracy—simply unattractive. Supporter communities certainly have their attractive features: a strong sense of belonging and unity and a sense of brotherhood (but not 'sisterhood'). Despite all

modernizing changes, it can be still a much-sought asset in social life, especially when the entire socio-cultural milieu has become extremely individualistic (Bauman 2001). This affects the socialization processes of new social groups. If the basic meanings that young people deal with today relate to cultivating their own lifestyle, to sharing it (including intimate aspects) through social media (Instagram, Facebook, etc.), to freely creating their own identity, without being burdened by any authoritarian systemic imperatives, enclaves which are based on strong group cohesion may become less attractive. Every new member aspiring to play a meaningful social role in a group of supporters must know that fandom culture follows strict rules, that hierarchy and subordination are the key, and that the path to decision-making roles is based on sacrifice for the good of the group and on charisma rather than democratic procedures.

Despite changes in the social context, however, there are a lot of young people in the groups of most engaged supporters, which demonstrates that there is still demand for this type of involvement. Nevertheless, the 'career' in such groups is usually not very long. Several years of research reveal that as time goes by fans move away from the core of the group and take more 'peripheral' positions (sometimes, especially on long trips to away matches, they draw attention of younger fans owing to their 'tales from the past'). They take more and more distant seats in the ultras stand, or even move to other parts of the stadium altogether. Taking on family and professional responsibilities, they naturally 'drop out' from the core: they cannot be on call all the time; they cannot spend long hours, often at night, preparing ultras choreographies. Their place is taken by new members, who are thus the key to the survival and continuity of this culture. This mechanism of reproducing social structures ensures the existence of supporters' groups and only in this way can they endure all sorts of turbulence.

Although the research presented here does not contain a quantitative component or analyse statistics related to the number of supporters in the ultras stands, general observations led to the conclusion that their number is not increasing. In the case of many clubs, especially smaller ones, from lower leagues and without potential for sports success, supporters' groups face difficulties in recruiting new members. In many cases, they also cease to operate. This particularly affects towns that do not offer

attractive prospects for young people: after leaving school, they move to larger centres to study or work. The opening of labour markets in the UK, Germany and other European Union countries also had a great impact on the number of supporters' groups in such places: since 2004 over two million Polish citizens have emigrated (*Rozmiar i kierunki…* 2018). Some of those who have left cultivate their attachment to the local clubs but they cannot revive the supporter movement here and now.

The impact of local circumstances does not mean, however, that it is impossible to draw more general conclusions based on a local case, as it is here: on the case of Poland. The application of more general theoretical concepts brings with it the great advantage of being able to interpret the collected material more broadly. One important theoretical framework in analysing the history of the fan movement in Poland has been Norbert Elias's figurational approach. This makes it possible to ask more general questions. Have supporters' groups in other countries, in other cultural contexts, undergone a similar 'civilizing process' and 'functional differentiation' in recent decades? Have the most aggressive groups 'professionalized' violence as they have in Poland? Do the conclusions from the Polish case support the implementation of a similar interpretative framework, for example in the case of the entire fan movement in Europe? Perhaps such a procedure would be a failure, but maybe it would turn out that there has been a 'civilizing process' on a larger scale, and that similar mechanisms exist in other countries.

A similar procedure can be used with regard to the concepts of Émile Durkheim, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, or Jeffrey Alexander, which have been employed here to explain some particular aspects of fandom culture in Poland. Do fans in other countries regard the denigration of club colours by rival fans as a profanation of the 'holy' universe? In what local contexts are supporters' groups still based on an undemocratic management style, strong group cohesion and sacrifice of personal interests for collective good? Are such structures, perhaps, a universal feature of the most involved fan groups, which would not otherwise be so tenacious, ardent and committed? Questions about some universal features seem to find positive answers in the studies of ultras groups on the global scale. It turns out that the interpretative frame drawing on performance theory finds application not only in the case of Polish ultras, but

also those from other countries, even outside Europe (see Doidge et al. 2020). This proves that studying local cases and interpreting them by applying more general theoretical concepts can inspire the analysis of similar elements of social life in other regions and contexts.

The application of the above theoretical approaches in the description of Polish fans can be viewed as 'the extension of theory' to new research areas. While the figurational sociology of Norbert Elias has been used in fan research (Dunning et al. 1988), and Elias himself was interested in sport as a field in which people—in a standardized and civilized way—seek excitement (Elias and Dunning 1986), incorporating this frame in the context of a post-communist country appears to be something new. Durkheim's theory has also been used in the study of sports fans, primarily in the context of 'religious' enthusiasm (see Eyre 1997; Serazio 2012). Likewise, Luckmann's concept of 'invisible religion' was applied to develop a typology of fans (Antonowicz and Wrzesiński 2009).

References to Durkheim's concept have also appeared in the context of deviant, hooligan behaviour of fans (Bodin et al. 2004; Dziubiński 2009). Breaking the law, violence and aggression have been investigated as examples of anomie and breaching social norms. The community of the most ardent football supporters can be described using the term 'mechanical solidarity', which Durkheim attributed to traditional communities. Used to describe English hooligans (Dunning and Sheard 2005: 202–204), the mechanical solidarity metaphor works well for groups that are united against an enemy who shares similar characteristics, for example a hooligan group of a derby rival. The analysis of the Polish case suggests broadening this interpretation: as it turns out, this type of social bond characterizes engaged fans in general, not only those participating in physical violence. In order to fully use the potential of the mechanical solidarity framework, it is necessary to analyse all aspects of this form of social structure and try to consider whether they fit the description of the phenomenon in focus. Such an attempt has been made here in the Polish case, although the Durkhemian frame is not the main interpretation applied in the study. However, its application provides the opportunity to demonstrate that many of the characteristics of 'mechanical solidarity' can be traced in groups of Polish supporters. This not only broadens the potential application of the theory, but makes it possible to conclude that

classic theoretical approaches can facilitate an understanding of contemporary phenomena.

This study of Polish supporters has also shown that an analysis of a local case makes it possible to incorporate various conceptual frameworks without prejudice towards these concepts. This can be done owing to the multidimensional approach to the phenomenon under investigation. In fact, this book can be regarded as a multifaceted ethnography of Polish club football fans in which respective theories have been applied to explain particular aspects of fandom culture. In some cases, then, they can be combined into more complex conceptualizations: it seems that here Durkheim's theory can be combined with the proposals of Berger and Luckmann. The latter provide the levels of legitimation that have been used here in the analysis of the stages of supporter socialization, a process whereby individuals learn the 'objective' social order. In the case of the fan world, the social is legitimated in terms of a symbolic universe—the club. The whole process of legitimation revolves around the idea of the club, a Durkheimian 'sacred' symbol which brings together a community that integrates successive individuals into a specific, 'mechanical' solidarity. For fans, the consequences of profanation of the 'sacred' are radical: from physical punishment to infamy and expulsion from the community.

This multidimensional ethnography of Polish supporters can provide a research framework for in-depth studies of supporter culture in other countries. Although it is difficult to take into account all significant dimensions of a given social world in a single study (Lofland et al. 2006), multidimensional analysis is possible when a long, extensive exploration process is involved. Ethnography of the world of fans proposed on the basis of this book could be settled on the study of the following dimensions: (1) the historical process of its emergence and evolution; (2) structural aspects of specific groups (e.g. power, hierarchy, control mechanisms); (3) systems of relations (discourses concerning bonds between individuals, relations with the 'outside' world); (4) the most important symbols organizing social life; (5) elements of group identity (gender, ideological, etc.); (6) a set of practices specific to the culture of the group (revealed in social situations); (7) ways of communicating group values

(performances, social media); (8) types of organizations active in the structure under study; and (9) forms of embodiment.

Not all of these dimensions have been thoroughly explored here: while some are discussed extensively, others are only mentioned. However, they can all be included in the more general categories which dominate in ethnography textbooks, such as people, places, practices and mechanisms (Madden 2017; Jerolmack and Khan 2018). The dimensions considered in this study of Polish fans can also be addressed in other regional contexts, which means that it can inspire further research.

Above all, however, this book is the final result of the process of working towards the aim described in the introduction: to prepare a multidimensional ethnographic case study providing answers to specific research questions. First, then, the book clarifies that we can distinguish particular types of club supporters: hooligans, ultras, activists. Although there are also fans who do not fall into any of these categories, they are all connected by a 'symbolic universe' of the club. Second, we can also attempt to estimate the three types in terms of their frequency. Ultras are the most numerous category: it includes almost every fan who is involved in the performative dimension or in the fan lifestyle in any way. Hooligans and activists are far less numerous as the specific nature of their activity is much more demanding. These two types are represented by very experienced and proven supporters who have passed all levels of 'legitimation' in practice.

Supporters' groups vary in terms of size, division of functions and structure. Understandably, small clubs located in small towns, or operating in areas with bigger derby rivals, have a smaller fan base. In such groups individual supporters very often deal with many functions at the same time. The situation is different in large centres, where the base of supporters is broader: several hundred or even several thousand people. This makes it possible to divide the different functions clearly: hooligan groups, supporters' association, ultras section, graffiti groups, website editors and so on. Everywhere, however, the decision-making process and the path to higher status in the group looks the same: it is a hierarchical system in which many fans can propose ideas, but their implementation depends only on the voice of decision-makers.

A description of the phenomenon in focus, if it is to be as full as possible, also needs to involve a processual approach. Understanding the phenomenon of Polish supporters would not be possible without following the process of the historical formation of this culture. Organized forms of supporting go back to the early 1970s. Over several decades, the social environment changed significantly in Poland, which had a great impact on fans. Retrospectively, the history of the fan movement in the country can be divided into the following periods. The first period, the 1970s, was the time of slow development, strongly determined by the influence of communist authorities. The first groups independent of the system were an exception. Between the early 1980s and the political breakthrough of 1989 supporters' groups became more independent, and their activity became a serious problem for law enforcement. Hooligan behaviour and the level of aggression and violence between rival groups continued to increase. The year 1989 changed the political and social situation in Poland, and the first years of transformation, another noteworthy period in the history of fandom, were marked by a significant increase in pathological behaviour, an unprecedented scale of violence and the emergence of extreme right-wing political ideas in many fan groups. The turn of the century saw the emergence of supporters' associations, more organized and specialized ultras groups, and the separation of hooligan groups from the rest. This period, then, was marked by a clear division of functions in this culture. This line of development was interrupted by a conflict with the government related to the organization of Euro 2012. Between 2007 and 2012, supporters faced increasingly strong political and legal restrictions. Although at that time fan culture came to be characterized by resistant identity, this did not result in the emergence of a significant social movement (despite the availability of extensive human resources). The tournament was followed by a period of relative stability, which, however, as can be seen after a few years, has given way to a slow regression. Many fan groups have come to be dominated by hooligan formations that also engage in illegal practices. Although access of the researcher to hooligan groups is methodologically difficult (and ethically doubtful), and thus it is more difficult to justify conclusions concerning hooliganism, it seems that this practice is becoming a barrier for the development of many supporters' groups. Another disadvantageous aspect is broader in nature: due

to wider civilizational changes, it is increasingly difficult for supporters' groups to attract new generations: young people have many alternative ways to spend their free time. In democratic Poland, there are also more and more identities to choose from.

Although qualitative research is not predisposed to investigating causality in the same way as experimental research, this does not mean that it cannot lead to the explanation of phenomena (Spencer et al. 2003). It is not dedicated to tracking relationships between particular variables, but takes into account the meanings that individuals attribute to behaviours and situations, and the context in which these individuals exist. This kind of understanding and explanation of phenomena is dominant in this book. On the one hand, it takes into account how fans build the meaning of their culture and community; on the other, the analysis of these meanings is conducted taking into account the social context of the changing Polish society. This makes it difficult to estimate the number of variables and factors affecting the phenomenon under study. Therefore, it should be noted that this ethnography of the culture of Polish club supporters does not exhaust the topic or provide a methodological closure.

This book is an invitation to further research, to expand our knowledge on the spaces and dimensions that have not been fully explored in this study. This is necessary not only because research in the field of fandom culture is constantly developing, but also because the research subject itself—fandom culture—is constantly changing.

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