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Beyond 'good' and 'bad' fans: exploring the mechanisms enabling football fans' position as a stakeholder in the management of circulations

Jan Andre Lee Ludvigsen

School of Humanities and Social Science, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK

ABSTRACT

This article explores mechanisms enabling football fans' position as a (safety) stakeholder in the context of European football. It is clear that fans, in the eyes of some football and political authorities, are considered to be 'potential troublemakers' or 'risks' that must be governed or controlled. However, at the same time, fans are also increasingly considered as contributors towards 'safe', 'secure', and 'enjoyable' football events. Borrowing theoretical insights from Foucault's writings on security and circulations, this article locates the football fan within what he calls a 'security dispositif'. By examining processes through which 'bad' and 'good' fan circulations and populations are enabled, this article looks at the conflicting and (sometimes) contradictory public fan identities that football and political authorities attribute to football fans. It is argued that fans' stakeholder role represents a counter to 'security' becoming defined solely on the terms of football's governing bodies and political authorities.

Introduction

When surveying the academic literature on football fandom, fan cultures and identities, there are often two key positions or frames attached to football fans, by political and football authorities and the media. Across Europe, fans have been, and are commonly considered by diverse authorities and the media as 'potential threats' to public order, safety and security at football events – threats that, subsequently, need to be governed or controlled.¹ Yet, fans are also to be provided *with* security and some are, increasingly, formally recognized as 'resources', 'stakeholders' and 'dialogue partners' on these matters.² This continuum, relating to a delineated '*dual role*' of fans, this paper aims to examine further by unpacking some of the central mechanisms that ultimately enable fans' position as stakeholders within the current context of safety and security, primarily around European football events.

Recent developments – still playing out at the time of writing – demonstrate why this continuum remains important to analyse for scholars. Against the backdrop of the February 2023 publication of the independent review report into the events surrounding the 2022 Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Champions League final in Paris, which contained several recommendations to ensure better fan safety at future events, it was also maintained that: 'Supporters are the lifeline of football, and organisers should pay attention to their organisational needs to the same extent they

CONTACT Jan Andre Lee Ludvigsen  j.a.ludvigsen@ljmu.ac.uk  School of Humanities and Social Science, Liverpool John Moores University, John Foster Building, 80–98 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5UZ, UK

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do with all other stakeholders'.³ In the UK, this stance was reinforced by the Sports Minister, Stuart Andrew, who highlighted the need for listening to the perspectives of fans ahead of the organization of future football events.⁴ As the role of the fans within football's safety and security seems to have taken on a new, complex political significance, it serves as particularly timely to reconsider the 'football fan's' position as a '(safety) stakeholder' in European football, subscribing then to the idea that European football actually reveals the 'application of broader worldwide patterns of social control'.⁵ By doing exactly this, this paper develops further some emerging frames and themes from my earlier work, where I have argued that football fans may be understood as subjects to be *secured* and *secured against*.⁶ However, to inform my argument, I simultaneously complement this with other insights from relevant social scientific literatures, policy documents, media sources and legal texts, most specifically the Council of Europe's (2016) Convention on an *integrated safety, security and service at sports events and football matches*. As contended, fans' position in security and safety consultation processes could represent a counter to security becoming defined solely according to the priorities of sport organizations, police and political authorities, and as Tsoukala asserts, 'seen through their eyes only'.⁷

The paper is organized into two main parts. First, I provide some theoretical considerations drawing from Michel Foucault's writings on security, power and the management of circulations, before revisiting the football fandom literature looking at how a heterogenous social group – football fans – are both subjects to be governed but, who simultaneously, in Foucauldian terms, can be attributed a degree of 'counter-power'⁸ encapsulated by their ability to impact or affect the governance they are subjected to. Second, I unpack the 2016 'Saint-Denis Convention' as one critical moment and mechanism that concretized engagement with supporters in the context of security, safety and service. In light of this, the paper briefly describes three vignettes or examples – monitoring, supporter liaison and fans' embassies – to demonstrate fans' increasingly formalized role as stakeholders in contemporary European football and hence, their dual, entangled position within football's 'security apparatuses'.

Security *dispositifs* and the management of 'good' and 'bad' circulations

Before this paper drifts towards the football fandom literature, it first maps out the main tenets of a broader theoretical relation that can aid our understanding of fans as 'threats' and 'stakeholders' within football's underlying security imperative. Following Giulianotti,⁹ Spaaij,¹⁰ and Turner and Lee Ludvigsen,¹¹ it is well-established that the work of Michel Foucault; especially his modern understandings of power as more subtle and invisible in its operation on individuals and groups, offers a range of relevant and thought-provoking theoretical tools for the exploration of, *inter alia*, 'risk', 'security', 'surveillance' or 'technology' in contemporary football. Building on this, this paper draws upon insights from Foucault and especially his conceptualizations of security, circulations and counter-conduct. It does so to locate football fans as subjects and targets within what can be understood as a security *dispositif*.¹²

In the lecture series published in 2008 as *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–89*, Foucault famously noted how 'techniques of government' focused on security, territories and control collectively reinforced a new political imperative, namely the management of circulations. Within the context of Foucault's exemplar – namely, the eighteenth-century urban town, security operated to single out 'good' and 'bad' circulations, promote the political economy of commercial exchange, and was predominantly bound to a question of 'how should things circulate or not circulate',¹³ in order to establish 'milieus of security' as planned and regulated spaces. This strand of Foucault's work therefore offers a novel way through which one may understand the transformation of power relations and security practices which emerged from the eighteenth century and onwards in Europe. Yet, it still remains highly relevant in a globalized era, characterized by its circulatory movements or mobilities.¹⁴

Following Foucault, security came to involve ‘organizing, or anyway allowing the development of ever-wider circuits’, thus ‘security’ was:

no longer that of fixing and demarcating the territory, but of allowing circulations to take place, of controlling them, sifting the good and the bad, ensuring that things are always in movement, constantly moving around, continually going from one point to another, but in such a way that the inherent dangers of this circulation are cancelled out.¹⁵

Considering this, as much as security then relates to the maximization of ‘good’ circulations, this depends also on the simultaneous elimination of dangerous elements and the attempts to diminish bad circulations¹⁶: those circulations that are ‘unstable’, ‘undesirable’ or ‘troubled’.

Central to this work is what Foucault called security *dispositifs* – or apparatuses of security. The strategic configurations emerge on state level ‘and its interventionism as a different way to manage population by “laissez-faire”, as a “freedom of circulation”’.¹⁷ *Dispositifs* are composed of the networked power relations, knowledges, discourses and technologies oriented towards the governance of, and exercise of power towards circulating populations. The security *dispositif* hence fuses *knowledge* on specific phenomena, for example, on ‘disorderly behaviour’, ‘violence’ or ‘crime’ and their regulation.

Another departure point here relates to the way in which population circulations are assigned a label or the category as ‘good’ or ‘bad’; which precedes the processes where the actual management of circulations occur, whereby identified ‘bad’ circulations (e.g. so-called ‘risk-fans’ or ‘hooligans’) must be controlled, and ‘good’ (e.g. ‘ordinary’, ‘peaceful’ or ‘non-risk’ fans) circulations must be ensured. Whilst reflective of the state’s authority, this also relates to a question of identity, whereby identities of social groups are invoked by powerful actors to construct ‘deviant groups’¹⁸ or ‘social enemies’¹⁹ to pave the way for regulatory mechanisms.²⁰ Whilst some existing analyses have looked at how such processes occur in spatial terms at past football mega-events,²¹ what this paper remains concerned with is the idea of *dispositifs*, and how fans ultimately become (or are) embedded in the security *dispositive* that enables social control over football fans in the context of European football events.

The ‘good’ and ‘bad’ fan? Between ‘troublemakers’ and ‘stakeholders’

At the heart of much of the football fandom literature are questions related to social identity and the politics of public order and social control.²² Indeed, it was the rising media and government attention given to ‘football hooliganism’ and disorder that, in part, generated the first wave of academic work on football and its fandom(s) from the 1970s and onwards.²³ A bulk of this explanatory work – drawing upon traditions within psychology, anthropology and sociology – pursued theoretical explanations of the ‘hooliganism’ phenomena in the UK and beyond.²⁴ Yet to an extent, the inception of this literature also captures how the ‘football fan’ both historically and presently is constructed or seen as a ‘threat’ to the public and social order and the safety of other fans and wider societies. Significantly, Testa reminds us that football ‘is not alien to the concept of risk control. In Europe, the securitization of the football stadium has been coupled with discourses focusing on the notion of identity’.²⁵

From the 1970s and onwards, the responses to violence and disorder in football took on a new social and political significance, exemplified by the fact that football supporters were among one of the first social groups in liberal post-War European countries subjected to systematic surveillance.²⁶ In Europe, since the 1980s and throughout the 1990s and 2000s, a new set of preventative policies on the level of the European Union (EU) and Council of Europe solidified the overarching view on the fan as a ‘potential troublemaker’²⁷ which, increasingly, circulated across transnational borders due to the presence, popularity and political economy of major international tournaments²⁸ like the World Cup, the Euros and the Champions League. Within the processes aiming to standardize responses to violence or disorder across Europe, it is, for example, common that fans are classified

according to the alleged ‘risk’ they pose to public order.²⁹ Fans also compose a (heterogenous) group subjected to specific legal responses,³⁰ making it possible to speak of the ‘juridification’ of football fandom, whereby notions of risk ‘still lurks in the background’.³¹

However, returning to Foucault, the importance of transnational circulations remains important here. European football experienced a marked growth in the 21st century encompassing higher attendance figures.³² And, in the context of European football events, these are not insignificant. To illustrate, approximately 2.4 million spectators attended stadiums during France’s Euro 2016 whilst, five years later, 1.1 million attended the ‘pan-European’ Euro 2020 fixtures despite the COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time.³³ Crucially, these figures do not account for the many fans gathering in fan zones and elsewhere in host cities, suggesting of course the connection between the imperative to secure football events and the circulations of individuals or groups.³⁴ Accordingly, as security governance has ‘become part and parcel of football as a spectator sport’,³⁵ these movements of populations are part of what the security *dispositif* in football tries to regulate: by blocking out ‘undesirable’ circulations of fans, and ensuring that ‘desirable’ fan populations can proceed safely and securely within the commodified, sanitized and festivalized event spaces.³⁶

Following the growth of academic writings on football fandom in the 1970s and 1980s, Cleland et al. highlight how social scientists, increasingly, began to research fandom in relation to other aspects and social changes.³⁷ Football fandom acquired a unique position for social scientists as a prism through which wider social processes could be understood, encapsulated, for instance, by the existence of various typologies of fans.³⁸ In Europe, this has occurred in parallel with the growing concern that wider commercialization processes have impeded football’s socio-cultural dimensions, which consequently mean that discourses around the governance of football have increasingly centred around the role of fans.³⁹ Within the work that has emerged on fandom *vis-à-vis* globalization, gender, homophobia, racism, and collective action and activism⁴⁰; this paper now focuses primarily on the latter two, and on how active fans contest processes of security and criminalization.

Discussions on ‘what constitutes good and bad supporter culture [are] not new’.⁴¹ Divisova speaks of a ‘genuine supporter/bad hooligan’ narrative,⁴² while Numerato argues that mainstream discussions of football fans have often proceeded on the binary notion of fans being either ‘customers’ or ‘criminals’.⁴³ Indeed, as related to this, a minority of fans have become an increasingly important political force through activism and collective action. Hence, academics have increasingly analysed how some fan movements have come to influence matters of security and safety in football and – by adopting Foucault’s grammar – impact or form a part of political and football authorities’ security *dispositifs* not merely as subjects to be secured from (e.g. as ‘potential troublemakers’) or as ‘customers’ to be provided with security.

This, concurrently, is *not* to suggest that fans have a say in security matters across all European contexts, nor that fans’ views are *always* considered on those elements of securitization that they resist, whether that is ‘safe standing’, heavy-handed or confrontational policing, stewarding or invasive surveillance technologies.⁴⁴ Regardless, and importantly, one may understand these fans as actors engaging in what Foucault called ‘counter-conduct’. This refers to the ‘struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others’.⁴⁵ As the literature documents, fans’ modes of ‘counter-conduct’ may be situated both within and around the stadia and in meeting or boardrooms.

For instance, it may take the shape of fanzines, banners, choreography or even protests contesting issues of heavy-handed policing or surveillance technologies.⁴⁶ Beyond this, however, some fan voices are increasingly recognized on a formal level in Europe. For example, based on their recent ethnographic work on the policing of football cultures in the UK, Pearson and Stott maintain that fans should not solely be understood as the subjects of football policing operations, but as vital resources for these processes.⁴⁷ Prior to this, Numerato also showed empirically how the critical engagement of fan activists across Europe has led to some involvement in the consultation processes on security issues in

football. Thus, fan involvement has moved beyond merely ‘symbolic recognition’.⁴⁸ As discussed later, one example of this includes the observer status of the fan network Football Supporters Europe (FSE) on the Council of Europe’s committee tasked with monitoring the application of the Convention. Indeed, UEFA and the Council of Europe’s recognition of the FSE meant that this European-wide supporter network, which covers issues such as fans’ rights, cultures and the fair policing of fans, also played part in the discussions when the new Convention was being developed in the mid-2010s.⁴⁹ Further, in the context of the recent independent report worked out after the 2022 Champions League final at *Stade de France*, it is observable that some members of the independent expert panel were fan representatives from (trans-)national supporter networks.⁵⁰

These examples, and other academic works⁵¹ reinforce the contention that the ‘transnational circulation of knowledge of critical knowledge relating to existing security measures and to the criminalised public image of football fans is without doubt stronger than it was one or two decades ago’.⁵² Despite these elements of progress, it is still important to remember some of Tsoukala et al.’s conclusions from their edited collection on ‘pan-European’ legal responses to ‘hooliganism’:

The growing quest for hegemony stands no opposition. In many of the countries analysed in this collection, representatives of football supporters’ organisations are excluded from negotiation processes and strategic meetings regarding football crowd management strategies. The fact that government and police unwillingness to engage in negotiations with football supporters is dissociated from the (in)efficiency of preventive policies is clearly evidenced in the German case where football supporters are excluded from the decision-making process despite the undeniable longstanding success of the Fan Projekts. Of the countries evaluated in this collection, only in England and Wales do we see an apparent move towards increasing supporter influence on policing strategy, but even here supporter voices are largely silent—or silenced—in the legislative process.⁵³

Importantly, on a European level, supporters’ organizations or individual fan representatives’ standing as stakeholders with a level of access to the upper echelons of European politics and football does not always translate into *influence* nor *power*, which remains relative to the power of the police, UEFA, international organizations and national associations.⁵⁴ Reinforcing this, Doidge et al. have also argued that the implementation and drafting of new rules or legislation in European football too often goes ahead without any genuine dialogue with, or input from fan groups. In media discourses too, Tsoukala argues that:

the goodwill actions undertaken by small groups of football supporters in countries staging international tournaments are hardly ever covered by the media in their countries of origin, which seem *de facto* reluctant to see the prevailing image of the ‘dangerous football supporter’ change.⁵⁵

It is understandable, thus, that Numerato warns us against approaching this enhanced formal recognition as an outright ‘impact’ of ‘success’ of fan activists involved in football’s securitization across Europe. In fact, he notes that general, post-9/11 security trends – most notably fears of terrorism – has meant that although fans might be publicly framed or recognized as stakeholders, political and football authorities ultimately possess the final say on the extension or implementation of new security measures or surveillance technologies in European football. In a way, this resonates with Ziesche’s remark that, on decision-making matters, ‘fans are – in best case scenarios – consulted or talked to, but rarely allowed in the “inner circle”’.⁵⁶

To this end, this article argues that it is possible to critically approach the security imperative in European football in Foucauldian terms, as relating both directly and indirectly to the management of circulations of fans, and as reliant upon the delineation process of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ fans. Notwithstanding, this has implications on the security *dispositive* consisting of institutional knowledge, discourses and structures seeking to make football safer and more secure whereby we see how fans are embedded in a duplex manner. As Doidge et al. write, historically and presently, fans are outlined as potential ‘troublemakers’, potential ‘terrorists’ and potential ‘hooligans’.⁵⁷ Fans are statically categorized according to the alleged ‘risk’ they pose,⁵⁸ and as such, the security *dispositive* becomes oriented towards the cancellation of the circulations of these fans. Then, ‘good’

circulations are desired. Accordingly, fans are also viewed as customers to be provided with security and some fans as stakeholders, resources or dialogue partners that can assist the processes through which some circulations take place and others are cancelled out.⁵⁹ This latter role, as argued next, was both concretized and made increasingly apparent in documentary form following the (Council of Europe's, 2016) Convention speaking to football and sports events.

The Council of Europe's convention: implications on fans and fan cultures

Whilst more detailed social scientific and historically rooted accounts of European-wide or (trans) national attempts to control football fans can be found elsewhere,⁶⁰ it is clear that the issues of security and safety in sport, as stated, have increasingly been responded to on a European level.⁶¹ Since the 1980s, one of the most prominent transnational efforts to establish safety and security at football and sport events, and to tackle issues associated with or arising from 'spectator violence' or 'anti-social behaviour' in football, has been led by the Council of Europe. Within this framework, the first Convention from 19 August 1985 ('The European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches, ETS No. 120') was drafted up shortly following, and responded to, the Heysel tragedy in the same year. This Convention set out to prevent and control 'spectator violence and to ensure the safety of spectators at sporting events',⁶² and contained numerous measures that signing parties had to implement and legislate for in order to control issues surrounding 'football hooliganism' and violence in football, relating to both 'potential' and 'known' troublemakers as those subjects that football needed to be secured from.⁶³

Three decades later, in July 2016, a new Convention passed, as the Council of Europe's Convention on an 'Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Events, CETS no. 218' was opened for signature. The need to modernize the 1985 Convention was rationalized in the 2016 Convention's explanatory report:

Over the past decade it became increasingly apparent that the content of the 1985 Convention was inconsistent with, and in some respects contradictory to, the approach and good practices established in recent years. Indeed, application of the Convention was widely considered to be inappropriate with some provisions felt to potentially exacerbate rather than counter the ongoing threat of violence and disorder, especially but not exclusively in connection with football matches.⁶⁴

Thus, the 2016 Convention, as an internationally binding instrument can be understood as an update of its 1985 predecessor characterized by its predominant focus upon violence.⁶⁵ Moreover, it is necessary to highlight that the 2016 Convention integrates three pillars – safety, security, service – with the aim of promoting enhanced cooperation between various stakeholders in order to create safe and secure environments at sport events.⁶⁶

In the context of the above discussion of football supporters' position within football's security apparatus, the 2016 Convention must therefore be understood as a key moment. On the one hand, it (still) clearly sets out to tackle the risk of 'violent' or 'disorderly' fans by focusing on responses to the 'risk of individuals or groups participating in or organising incidents of violence or disorder'.⁶⁷ On the other hand, the Convention also emphasizes the need for engagement with supporters and local communities. The Convention's Article 8 on engagement with supporters and local communities states:

The Parties shall encourage all agencies to develop and pursue a policy of proactive and regular communication with key stakeholders, including supporter representatives and local communities, based on the principle of dialogue, and with the aim of generating a partnership ethos and positive co-operation as well as identifying solutions to potential problems.⁶⁸

Importantly, the *dual role* of fans hence becomes visible in the above examples. One implication of this, is that security measures, according to the Convention, relate to the measures designed to prevent and reduce the risk of violence and criminal activities associated with football events (inside

and outside stadiums). In other words, in accordance with Foucault, security relates to the government of desirable and undesirable populations and circulations. A segment of supporters defined as 'key stakeholders' are thus embedded into the security *dispositif* through the formal mechanism of an internationally binding instrument, in which the aforementioned role of fans as (safety) stakeholders is enshrined.

However, this opens up a number of important questions. For instance, how exactly are fans 'engaged'? Under the pillar of 'service', as focused on making safe atmospheres and enjoyable events; how exactly might supporters' (pro-)active engagement contribute towards this? Also, how might fans and 'fans' power' be situated within the wider security *dispositif* encapsulated by the Convention's references to a 'multi-agency integrated approach'? In order to engage with these questions, the next sections describe three avenues through which researchers may obtain a clearer view of fans as (safety) stakeholders. These include monitoring exercises, supporter liaison and fans' embassies. As argued, these examples further illustrate the point that fans' stakeholder role has become increasingly formalized,⁶⁹ but I also discuss in my concluding comments how this role relates back to the management of circulations in football.

Monitoring the Convention's application

The signature of the 2016 Convention represents a key moment in fans' transnational activism. It emphasized the need to engage with supporters' perspectives in the organization of sporting events.⁷⁰ In regards to FSE, this supporter network has been an observer in the Council of Europe's Standing Committee on the Convention on Spectator Violence since 2009. In 2021, this observer status was renewed until October 2024.⁷¹ The Committee, which is composed of national experts and observers, is established in order to monitor the application of the 2016 Convention. Yet, it remains important to note that while observers – as 'non-members' of the Council of Europe – take part in meetings, they do not possess the right to vote.⁷² The process of monitoring takes place via visits to states, recommendations on how the Convention can be implemented, as well as participation on specific working groups, such as the 'Euro 2020 Working Group'.⁷³ Whilst SD Europe also held observer status until the 2022 merger with FSE, the latter organization has continued to participate on, for instance, preparatory visits in host cities that will stage specific games or tournaments (e.g. European finals).

Taken together, this reflects how supporter networks have access to places and spaces of interaction between the key actors in European football. As my earlier, empirical work drawing on the perspectives from some of the fan representatives involved in this shows, some representatives feel that this has enabled enhanced modes of knowledge and information exchange between supporters and other stakeholders. Some also suggest that the exposure of fan networks within this context has grown over the last decade.⁷⁴ Given that security and safety in football often relies on the reproduction of good practices and knowledge, it can be argued that fans' monitoring role means they are positioned to contest a situation whereby hegemonic versions or visions of security proceed without debate or opposition from supporter perspectives.

Supporter liaison

Under UEFA's licencing rules, football clubs have since the 2012/13 season been required to appoint an SLO to act as a bridge between supporters and clubs (or national football associations), security and football authorities. The SLO is typically a fan with existing networks and expertise on fan cultures.⁷⁵ The development of the SLO role and the associated document titled the *SLO Handbook* was, in themselves, influenced by the supporter network, Supporters Direct Europe,⁷⁶ appointed by UEFA to guide the introduction of SLOs across Europe and assist national associations.⁷⁷ Whereas the limited academic work on SLOs, a decade after its inroad into the football world, focuses on their roles in club football, it is important to highlight that they are

occasionally deployed in international football by some national teams. However, as UEFA's *Practical Guide to Supporter Liaison* notes, national team SLOs 'are a relatively new phenomenon' though increasingly football associations have introduced national team SLOs against the backdrop of the 2016 Council of Europe Convention's service pillar; either by using existing club SLOs at national level, or by employing a full-time dedicated SLO for national team.⁷⁸

Ultimately, the use of SLOs in international football can be seen as another fan-oriented mechanism that solidify fans' stakeholder position in the management of circulations, that adds towards fans' enjoyment and feelings of safety or security. Here, SLOs might operate as a 'bridge' between fan bases and national associations; improve relationship between diverse fan bases and provide information ahead of away games or tournaments.⁷⁹ As I have argued elsewhere, SLOs in the context of European football mega-events can be seen as important joints in the wider strategies of ensuring communication and dialogue between fans, stewards, the police and football authorities.⁸⁰

Importantly, in October 2022, a specific 'SLO Resolution' was adopted by the Council of the EU. This resolution laid out 'recommendations for EU member states to implement [and] focuses on the good practice of police and their coordination with SLOs', and it was considered by the FSE as a resolution that gave: 'greater credibility and puts the expectation and responsibility on EU member states and their police to follow the recommendations'.⁸¹ Concerning international matches, it is also worth highlighting that the resolution strongly recommends that: 'all football federations appoint and resource a national team SLO to undertake core SLO duties in connection with international matches played at home and abroad'.⁸² If UEFA, Council of Europe and Council of the EU are understood as powerful 'decision-making centres' in this context,⁸³ then the SLO role, as recognized by all these decision-makers, again illustrates supporters' increasingly formalized role in the security, safety and service at football events in Europe and potential 'counter-power'.

Fans' embassies

Finally, fans' embassies remain another strategy at major football events through which fans' stakeholder role becomes increasingly apparent. Since the 1990s, so-called fans' embassies have been utilized in football mega-event host cities, including the Euros and the World Cup. Since Euro 1996 in England, fans' embassies have been used to support, inform and provide service for fans of national teams with logistical aspects related to the attendance of football mega-events. Following FSE, fans' embassies – coordinated by supporters' organizations and with teams made up by volunteers⁸⁴ – can provide 'accurate, reliable, up-to-date, independent, and objective information on any matters of interest to travelling fans'.⁸⁵

As Mariovet and Silverio write, the perceived positive outcomes of fans' embassies therefore led to a Council of Europe recommendation on the creation of fans' embassies and that other football and political authorities should support these initiatives. Overall, fans' embassies can be understood as socio-preventive mechanisms seeking to respond to violence and xenophobic behaviour during international football competitions.⁸⁶ As I have shown previously, some fan representatives feel that fans' embassies not merely provide a safe space for supporters visiting mega-events, but they also stress how the successful operation of fans' embassies rely heavily on close communication with other stakeholders, including the police, football associations, and authorities.⁸⁷ Hence, if we understand FSE as a hub for network activities allowing wider fans to access information and strategies,⁸⁸ then the fans' embassies may be understood as *one expression* of this during football mega-events.

Conclusion

Football is commonly considered a space for belonging and social collectives. In the context of this special issue's discussions of fan identities and cultures, this paper has considered some of the wider

tensions and contradictions within the discourses surrounding football fans and their enlarging roles across Europe. According to Testa, '[w]hen governments invoke the concept of identity, in many cases this is related to some sort of risk control priority aimed, for instance, at perceived deviant groups'.⁸⁹ From the viewpoint of political and football authorities, it is apparent how a security *dispositif* shape the construction of *public* supporter identities and continues the framing of fans as (i) 'potential troublemakers'; (ii) subjects to be secured and that, essentially, (iii) can contribute to and consult on security matters through the more formalized stakeholder role afforded to some fan organizations or representatives.

As I have argued elsewhere, fan networks and representatives are important transporters of knowledge before, during and in-between European football events.⁹⁰ Developing this further here, this article focused on how, within a security *dispositif*, fans (and their knowledge) are embedded through formal and institutional channels as stakeholders (e.g. Convention articles, supporter liaison, fans' embassies, monitoring exercises). Overall, this adds to the notion that there has been a 'discursive redefinition of supporters in the corridors of football governance at European level'.⁹¹ Meanwhile, if, as Tsoukala et al. contend, '[f]ootball supporters should assume their responsibility in what, by definition, must become a collective struggle to restore declining democratic governance in Europe',⁹² then this paper provides examples of *how* some of this responsibility is (or can be) assumed. I also suggest that Foucauldian understandings of security might help us understand the circulation-oriented aims that lie beneath the delineation of 'good'/'bad' fans and, ultimately, concerning the idea of 'counter-power', the involvement of fans and their knowledge in the safety and security consultation process poses a challenge to, and can counter 'security' becoming hegemonically defined solely on football governing bodies, police and political authorities' terms.

Notes

1. See Doidge et al., 'The impact of international football events on local, national and transnational fan cultures'.
2. Pearson and Stott, *A New Agenda*; Lee Ludvigsen, *Sport Mega-Events, Security and Covid-19*; Cleland et al., *Collective Action and football fandom*.
3. UEFA Independent Review Panel, Independent Review: 2022 UEFA Champions League Final, chaired by Tiago Brandao Rodrigues, 6.
4. BBC, 'Champions League: Sports minister wants fans to have input on 2024 final at Wembley'.
5. Tsoukala et al., 'Conclusions', 175.
6. Lee Ludvigsen, *Sport Mega-Events, Security and Covid-19*.
7. Tsoukala, *Football Hooliganism in Europe*, 131.
8. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.
9. Giulianotti, 'Risk and sport'.
10. Spaaij, 'Risk, security and technology'.
11. Turner and Lee Ludvigsen, 'Theorizing surveillance and social spacing through football'.
12. Cf. Tsoukala, 'Security policies & human rights'.
13. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 64.
14. Aradau and Blanke, 'Governing circulation'.
15. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 65.
16. Ibid., 18.
17. Bigo, 'Security', 96.
18. Testa, 'The All-Seeing Eye of State Surveillance in the Italian Football (Soccer) Terraces'.
19. Tsoukala, *Football Hooliganism in Europe*.
20. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.
21. Klauser, 'Spatialities of security and surveillance'.
22. Giulianotti et al., 'Introduction'.
23. Lawrence and Crawford, 'Towards a digital football studies'.
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25. Testa, 'The All-Seeing Eye of State Surveillance in the Italian Football (Soccer) Terraces'.
26. Tsoukala, 'Football supporters' rights: A lost cause?'.
27. Tsoukala, *Football Hooliganism in Europe*.

28. Bourdieu, 'The State, Economics and Sport'.
29. Spaaij, 'Risk, security and technology'.
30. Rookwood and Spaaij, 'Violence in football (soccer)'; Tsoukala, *Football Hooliganism in Europe*.
31. Carlsson and Backman, 'Juridification of fandom'.
32. Ibid.
33. See: [https://www.statista.com/statistics/378230/uefa-euro-total-attendance/#:~:text=This%20statistic%20shows%20the%20total,2021\)%20live%20in%20the%20stadiums](https://www.statista.com/statistics/378230/uefa-euro-total-attendance/#:~:text=This%20statistic%20shows%20the%20total,2021)%20live%20in%20the%20stadiums). (accessed March, 2023).
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35. Spaaij and Testa, 'Football hooliganism', 370.
36. Lee Ludvigsen, *Sport Mega-Events, Security and Covid-19*.
37. Cleland et al., *Collective Action and Football Fandom*.
38. Giulianotti, 'Supporters, followers, fans, and flaneurs'.
39. Garcia and Welford, 'Supporters and football governance'.
40. Cleland et al., *Collective Action and Football fandom*.
41. Karlén and Radman, 'Swedish supporter culture', 2.
42. Divisova, 'Euro 2016 and its security legacy'.
43. Numerato, *Football fans, Activism, Social Change*.
44. Ibid.
45. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 201.
46. See: Lee Ludvigsen, 'Risk and Football'; The Independent, 'Liverpool fans protest against Uefa at Real Madrid match'; Nash, 'Contestation in Modern English Football'; Karlén and Radman, 'Swedish supporter culture'; Webber and Turner, 'Standing Here'.
47. Pearson and Stott, *A New Agenda*.
48. Numerato, *Football fans, Activism, Social Change*.
49. Cleland et al., *Collective Action and Football fandom*.
50. UEFA Independent Review Panel, Independent Review: 2022 UEFA Champions League Final, chaired by Tiago Brandao Rodrigues, 6.
51. Lee Ludvigsen, *Sport Mega-Events, Security and Covid-19*; Cleland et al., *Collective Action and Football fandom*.
52. Numerato, *Football fans, Activism, Social Change*, 92.
53. Tsoukala et al., 'Conclusions', 174–175.
54. Cleland et al., *Collective Action and Football fandom*.
55. Tsoukala, *Football Hooliganism in Europe*, 123.
56. Ziesche, 'A product thirty years in the making', 9.
57. Doidge et al., 'The impact of international football events on local, national and transnational fan cultures'.
58. Giulianotti, 'Risk and sport'.
59. Cf. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*.
60. Please consult, *inter alia*, Tsoukala, *Football Hooliganism in Europe*; Tsoukala et al., 'Conclusions'.
61. Tsoukala, 'Combating football crowd disorder at the European level'.
62. Coenen et al., 'Legal responses to football "hooliganism"', 8.
63. Williams and Vannucci, 'English hooligans and Italian ultras sport', 8.
64. Council of Europe, 'Explanatory Report – CETS 2018', 2.
65. Byrne and Lee Ludvigsen, 'The Duty of Engagement'.
66. Council of Europe, 'CETS 218'.
67. Ibid., 6.
68. Ibid., 5.
69. e.g., Numerato, *Football fans, Activism, Social Change*.
70. Ibid.
71. See: <https://www.fanseurope.org/news/fse-granted-observer-status-on-council-of-europe-standing-committee/>.
72. See: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/sport/standing-committee-of-the-european-convention-on-spectator-violence>.
73. Lee Ludvigsen, *Sport Mega-Events, Security and Covid-19*; Lee Ludvigsen, 'The troika of security'.
74. Ibid., see Chapter 4.
75. Madsen et al., 'Swedish Supporter Liaison Officers in action'.
76. Here, it is important to point out that in October 2022, FSE and SD Europe merged into one European supporters' organization.
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79. Ibid.
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81. FSE, 'Council of EU adopts SLO resolution'.
82. Council of the EU, 'Council Resolution concerning good practice', 15.
83. Tsoukala, 'Combating football crowd disorder at the European level'.
84. Lee Ludvigsen, *Sport Mega-Events, Security and Covid-19*.
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86. Marivoet and Silverio, 'Football fan cultures after the Euro 2004 in Portugal', 722.
87. Lee Ludvigsen, *Sport Mega-Events, Security and Covid-19*.
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89. Testa, 'The All-Seeing Eye of State Surveillance in the Italian Football (Soccer) Terraces', 69.
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92. Tsoukala et al., 'Conclusions', 176.

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