

## **The Italian *ultras*: from local divisions to national co-operation**

Dr Mark Doidge, Research Fellow, School of Sport and Service Management

### **Abstract**

Since their emergence in the 1960s, the *ultras* have become the dominant form of football fandom in Italian football. Their visual style has been adopted across Europe, particularly in Southern and Eastern Europe and North Africa. The early development of the *ultras* was characterised by political involvement. Later the identity incorporated violence and extreme localism. Since the 1990s, *ultras* have been co-operating across traditional political and local divides in order to challenge legislation and assert 'their' power over football. Yet this is only in relation to their perceived idea of fandom, not on issues of governance. Drawing on ethnographic research in Italy, alongside interviews with leading fan-activists across Europe, this paper will highlight the development of the *ultras* and argue that the traditional divisions based on politics and localism are beginning to be eroded. This is being replaced with a more co-operative '*mentalità ultras*' (Doidge 2015). Affirming Maffesoli's (1996) argument that society is not becoming more individualised, but in fact new forms of association are emerging. More importantly, these 'neo-tribes' are tied to consumption. Fundamentally, these changes are tied to the rapid globalisation of football that took place through out the 1990s. Increasing commercialism tested the *ultras*' notion of football fandom. This has also been challenged by an increasingly draconian approach from the Italian government attempting to control the excesses of the *ultras*. The unintended consequence of these approaches have made it harder for non-*ultras* to attend the stadium and merely reinforced the *ultras* feelings of persecution and justification that they are the authentic voice of football fans. Despite this unified mentality, they are not challenging the authorities on governance aspects. They are continuing to engage in the forms of protest they have always engaged in, rather than begin a dialogue.

**Key Words:** *ultras*; fans; activism; neo-tribes

In July 2014, the *Gazzetta dello Sport* journalist Andrea Monti (2014) suggested that Italian football was at 'year zero'; it had to start again. This introspection was instigated by the Italian national team's early exit from the World Cup in Brazil. The day after the Azzurri were eliminated in the first round, a Napoli fan, *Ciro Esposito*, died in hospital. A Roma fan had shot *Esposito* before the Coppa Italia final between Napoli and Fiorentina. The final is intended to showcase Italian football. Coming at the end of the Serie A league season, it brings together to leading Italian clubs at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome. Unfortunately the final on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2014 showcased another side of Italian football. A confrontation occurred between a Roma fan, *Daniele De Santis*, and some Napoli fans, including *Esposito*. Shots were fired in the clash; three Napoli fans were injured, with *Esposito* dying from his wounds two months later. As a result of this violence, Napoli fans in the stadium became restless. There is a longstanding rivalry between Napoli and Roma fans, and many Neapolitans were concerned for their own safety and the wellbeing of their fellow fans. In the absence of official information, the Napoli fans started to agitate for the game to be delayed or abandoned. Various missiles, including flares, were thrown onto the pitch in order to disrupt the start of the match. The central symbol of these disturbances became the head of the Napoli *ultras*, *Gennaro De Tommaso*. Nicknamed, *Genny 'a carogna* (*Genny the swine*), the *capo-ultras* was seen sitting astride the security fences. The authorities attempted to negotiate with *Genny 'a carogna* in order to allow the game to commence. In the end, the Napoli captain *Marek Hamšík* persuaded the *ultras* to stop, and the game kicked off forty-five minutes late.

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

abandon the match. After the game, *ultras* of both Lazio and Roma joined forces to attack the police.

These two events highlight a significant shift in the development of the *ultras*. What is occurring is a *Mentalità Ultras* (Doidge, 2015), an *ultras* mentality that is unifying members of groups who would traditionally have been considered rivals. Although the traditional local and traditional divisions continue, an overarching *ultras* identity is forming. This *Mentalità Ultras* is emerging in opposition to various changes in football, particularly commercialisation and state '*repressione*' in the shape of Draconian laws and excessive policing. It is difficult to suggest all *ultras* are homogenous; there are many internal contradictions and interpretations (Numerato, 2014). Despite this, there are some broad umbrella protests. Even though they claim to represent the 'authentic' voice of football fans, they are uniting to maintain their own privileged position within the patrimonial structure of Italian football. Ultimately they are continuing to engage in the forms of protest that are familiar to the movement – banners and violence – rather than constructive dialogue. This chapter places the *ultras* within the wider governance of Italian football. It argues that rather than fragmenting, *ultras* are uniting in new ways. Part of this process is not due to the internal dynamics, but to outside forces, namely *repressione* from the state and excessive policing. Ultimately, however, the *ultras* are not fighting to change the system, but to preserve their own privileged position and reifying their identity. The chapter finishes with some alternative approaches to engage with governance of Italian football and argues that co-operation and constructive dialogue between *all* parties involved in football will be the best way forward for fans, authorities and clubs.

### **The governance of Italian football**

In order to understand the events that preceded the 2014 Coppa Italia final, it is important to place it in the wider governance context. Many of these issues relate to the ownership structure of Italian football clubs. The family approach to capitalism in Italy is replicated in football. Early in the sport's development, clubs were incorporated into the corporate family of leading industrialists. This allowed them to extend their patronage to their workers, the local community and wider political society (Doidge, 2015). This is clearly illustrated with the Agnelli

family. Giovanni Agnelli established the car manufacturer Fiat in 1899. His son, Edoardo purchased Juventus in 1923. The club has been in the family ever since; the current president is Andrea Agnelli. Elsewhere, Olivetti and Pirelli became involved with AC Milan and Inter respectively in the 1930s. It is clear that through Pirelli's sponsorship of Inter's jerseys today that they remain part of the corporate structure.

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

Unlike the 'new directors' (King, 1997) in England, Italian football has not been driven purely by the profit motive. Instead, football provided an important vehicle for political patronage (Doidge, 2015). This has led to an interesting relationship between fans and owners in Italy.

Portelli (1993) has highlighted how Italian fans valorise the owner who provides them with success. Paradoxically, they also resent the fact that they are dependent on this owner. Worse is the fact that the owner does not love the club as much as the fans. This 'love-hate' relationship directly impacts on the role of the *ultras*, as well as their approach to governance. As Numerato (2014, p4) argues that 'the relationship between supporters and institutions of 'modern' football is dynamic and blurred'. This is particularly apposite in the Italian case as owners have incorporated leading *ultras* into their patrimonial networks (Doidge, 2015). They have provided concessions to sell club merchandise or free tickets to *ultras* groups in return for their compliance. In some cases, *ultras* have been used in power struggles between directors (Scalia, 2009). Others, including Berlusconi, buy players as gifts to the fans. The result is that the *ultras* have gained strong legitimacy with the clubs. This led to the former England manager, Fabio Capello, to declare that 'In Italy the *ultras* are in charge' (*La Gazzetta dello Sport*, 2009).

### **The development of the *ultras***

The *ultras* are the dominant image of Italian football. They are organised groups of predominantly young male fans. Although significant numbers of female *ultras* exist in Italy, they do not dominate in the organising committees (*direttivi*) or group leaders ('*capo*') (Cere, 2002). *Ultras* support 'their' team with spectacular choreographies of banners, flags, flares, and chanting. These features derived from their early development. *Ultras* groups grew out of the supporters clubs in the 1960s. Podaliri and Balestri (1998) distinguished four broad phases of development. The original groups developed in the politically turbulent years of the late 1960s and 1970s. Members took the banners and chants from the political protests into the stadium. By the late 1970s the *ultras* started to fragment. New groups emerged in the 1980s that were influenced by English hooliganism. These groups of *cani randagi* (stray dogs) preferred to focus on violence, rather than politics. At the same time, many of the older groups also became apolitical. The tragic death of a Genoa fan, Vincenzo Spagnolo, in 1995 signalled a new form of collective mentality, the *Mentalità Ultras* and this has united disparate groups (Doidge, 2015). Although Testa and Armstrong (2010) call these new groups *UltraS* to demarcate them from previous incarnations of the *ultras*, this suggests that there is something fundamentally

different with these new groups. As the following paragraphs on the historic development of the *ultras* phenomenon, there are many features that continue from previous eras. Whilst they emphasise difference, the similarities are also being utilised by groups to form their collective identity. What is different is that *ultras* of rival groups sometimes work together to protest against state *repressione*.

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

The differences intensified in the 1980s. New groups appeared who were focused on violence (Podaliri and Balestri, 1998). The growth of right-wing politics in wider Italian society also saw an outlet on the *curve* ('terraces'). Although the political banners of the 1970s were disappearing, racism and right-wing slogans increased in certain clubs. *Campanilismo* ensured that the city became a small 'mother country' (Podaliri and Balestri 1998, p.95). Outsiders were open to be

abused. This was prominently seen in relation to teams from the south of the peninsular. Reflecting the anti-Southern rhetoric of new political parties like the Northern League, *ultras* groups declared that the south was another country.

The *ultras* during this period seem to confirm various individualisation theses that suggest that society is fragmenting and becoming more individual. Since the formation of the discipline of sociology, there has been academic interest in the change and development of society. Tönnies and Durkheim both identified a shift from community to society or from mechanical to organic solidarity. Sennett (1976) and Habermas (1989) both suggested that individuals were withdrawing from public engagement and this contributed to an individualisation of society. This thesis found political popularity after Putnam (1993, 2000) suggested that this withdrawal from public involvement contributed to a decline in political engagement. Whilst the *ultras* seemed to be fragmenting, and becoming apolitical, it is not automatic that this conforms to these arguments. As mentioned above, some *ultras* groups were still engaged in politics, particularly regionalist and Far Right politics. Moreover, the fact that *ultras* were still coming together regularly to support their team suggests that social groups were still strong. During the 1980s and 1990s, Serie A had the highest attendances in European football, particularly in contrast to English and German football (Doidge, 2105).

It took the tragic death of Vincenzo Spagnolo to stop the divisions magnifying. The *ultras* were publically demonised after the murder. The backlash led to the *ultras* of traditional rivals of Genoa and Sampdoria to organise a meeting of leading *ultras* groups (Ferreri, 2008; Stefanini, 2009). This signals a move towards what Maffesoli (1996) calls a 'neo-tribe'. Rather than society becoming more individualised, Maffesoli argues that although old political and social groups are fragmenting, new ones are forming. Significantly for the *ultras*, these neo-tribes are forming around consumption and 'tied by culture, communication, leisure or fashion, to a commodity' (Maffesoli 1996, p.81). Melucci (1989) and Touraine (1981) have also argued that new forms of political identity are forming around consumption. No longer are they based on class-based politics, but are often temporary and coalesce around a singular issue. In England these single-issues were related to economic changes, stadium renovation, and new forms of ownership

(King, 2003; Millward, 2011). In Italy they were joining around economic changes to football and how the state policed the sport.

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

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

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

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

Unlike the exceptional congregation of the Durkheim's collective effervescence, *puissance* is generated in the mundane everyday encounters of its members – 'in all the places where chit-chat and conviviality are present' (p25). Just as Nowell-Smith (1979) argued, football is not simply played over the course of ninety minutes on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. It is played and re-played throughout the week in conversations and media analysis. The mundanity of interactions around football help generate the emotional bond with a wider collective.



Maffesoli drew on Simmel's (1950) theory of sociability which suggested that individuals come together for the sheer pleasure of having shared interests. For many fans and *ultras*, there is no greater desire than to be with other people who have a common outlook. Sociability is an end in itself; it is mundane. Just as Durkheim effectively argued that the group create the totemic symbol as a representative of themselves, and by worshipping the totem they are effectively worshipping themselves, Simmel's sociability effectively results in the focus of the group becoming themselves.

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

The concept of *pouvoir* is important when addressing the relationship of the *ultras* to the state and the football authorities. Although individual *ultras* groups conform to Maffesoli's theory of neo-tribes, the *Mentalità Ultras* is uniting different *ultras* groups from different clubs and overriding traditional differences. In Italy, the *ultras* have united in opposition to the commercial development of football. Under the umbrella 'no to modern football', the *ultras* are vocalising their opposition to what they see as 'modern', commercial football. Opposition under the banner of 'no to modern football' has taken many forms; including protest banners and supporters' strikes. This provides, as Numerato (2014, p7) argues, 'a common vocabulary and shared experiences enhance the supporters' sense of solidarity and contribute to the

development of tactics of protest'. This was reinforced through the development of the 'Against Modern Football Manifesto' that circulated the internet forums of various *ultras* groups in the early twenty-first century<sup>i</sup>. Whilst the manifesto was a significant development in the movement, the majority of the protests continued 'traditional' *ultras* forms of protests. This draws on the performative aspects of the *ultras* style of support without entering into dialogue with clubs, federations or government. Ultimately, however, the authorities' *repressione* of *ultras* activities strengthen the collective *Mentalità Ultras*, but this helped to focus attention away from issues of governance.

### **Repressione and the *Mentalità Ultras***

The authorities have helped to help create the image of the *ultras*. Since the 1970s, violence has been a part of some *ultras* repertoire. This has enabled them to be constructed as a 'folk devil' (Marchi, 2005). After the 'derby of the dead child' between Roma and Lazio in 2004, the media speculated whether the *ultras* had pre-planned the move to protest against new laws that could have led their clubs to enter administration. Similarly, the head of Rome's police, Achille Serra, stated that he suspected that the violence was premeditated. As Cohen (2002) has argued, the moral panic creates a self-perpetuating cycle that necessitates a hard-line approach from the police and government. If the *ultras* are a folk devil, then the politicians seek to address this through legislation and the police focus their efforts accordingly. This results in more arrests and issues related to *ultras* and acts as justifications to the law-makers.

Draconian legislation was imposed after the death of a policeman, Filippo Raciti, during a riot between Catania and Palermo *ultras* in 2007. The Pisanu law was imposed in an attempt to clamp down on the excesses of the *ultras*. Additional security barriers were erected around stadiums and new regulations were imposed on purchasing tickets. The rules governing football banning orders, *Daspos (Diffida ad Assistere alle manifestazioni Sportive)*, were also expanded. The problem with these new laws was that they were imposed under the *Decreto Legge* (Decree Laws). These laws are permitted in the constitution to impose emergency legislation. Testa (2013) argues that these laws bypass parliamentary debate and have created an ad hoc approach to the problems in the stadium. An AS Roma fan and lawyer, Lorenzo Contucci (2010)

has argued that a thorough debate in parliament would produce a more beneficial result. In a personal interview he made a similar point about the 'emotional', reactive approach to Decree Laws:

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

The authorities also attempted to impose a supporters' identity card, *la tessera del tifoso*. The idea for the *tessera* was to make it easier to purchase tickets, to verify that fans with Daspos could not enter the stadium, and to allow clubs to market their products. An unintended consequence of the introduction of the *tessera* was to facilitate the continued unification of the *Mentalità Ultras*. Fans of rivals groups put aside their political and local differences to unite in opposition to the card's introduction (Guschwan 2013). The teamwork culminated in a national protest held in Rome. Despite this collaboration it has not translated into constructive challenges over governance, but focussed on the state and the police.

In an attempt to break the power of the *ultras*, the state has unintentionally helped provide the focus for them to unite as outsiders. As Stott and Reicher (1998) and Stott and Pearson (2007) argue in relation to hooliganism, fans that expect a negative response from the authorities unite to protect themselves. This 'Outsider' mentality is also being demonstrated through slogans and banners prominently displayed by *ultras*. The police have become the central focus of the *ultras'* anger. As witnessed after the 'derby of the dead child' between Lazio and Roma in 2004, the fans of both sides united to attack the police. This hostility to the police can be witnessed in 'ACAB syndrome' (Stefanini 2009). The acronym for the English term 'All Cops Are Bastards' has become a standard banner amongst many *ultras* groups across Europe. Others include '*libertà per gli ultras*' ('Liberty for the *ultras*') and 'No to Modern Football', the slogans that appears on T-Shirts and graffiti (Numerato, 2014; Doidge, 2015). The authorities help reinforce this

approach. In 2008, the derby between Napoli and Roma was preceded by violence. 2000 Napoli fans without tickets were permitted to travel to Rome and were met with 'zero tolerance' from the police. The police reinforced their approach by releasing figures stating that eight hundred of the two thousand fans had criminal records, including twenty-seven with links to the Camorra. At the next match, hundreds of Napoli fans demonstrated their 'Outsider' status by sporting T-shirts stating, 'I've got a criminal past' (Hawkey, 2008).

The authorities' approach is not just uniting *ultras* that support the same team. As occurred after the 'derby of the dead child', rival fans are uniting and displaying solidarity with one another. As Maffesoli (1996) argued, new solidarity is being formed despite the fragmentation of old identities. This is exacerbated by the perceived persecution of the *ultras*. Not only are the security measures called '*repressione*', but perceived injustices are reinforcing the animosity felt by *ultras* groups. Nine months after Filippo Raciti was killed, a Lazio fan was shot and killed by a policeman. Gabriele Sandri was asleep on the back seat of a car parked in an Autogrill at the edge of a motorway. In the car park alongside there was a confrontation between some Juventus and Lazio fans. As it resolved itself, a policeman ran towards them, gun drawn, and accidentally fired. The bullet passed through the car and killed Sandri. Whereas all games were cancelled after the death of the policeman Raciti, the authorities only cancelled the Lazio match. In Bergamo, Atalanta fans attempted to have their game cancelled and started attacking the Perspex security walls that separated the fans from the pitch. *Ultras* of different clubs and different groups were showing solidarity with Sandri and Lazio; they realised that it could have been them accidentally shot by the police. On the anniversary of Sandri's death, Parma fans displayed a banner outside their stadium stating 'A year has passed, but we have not forgotten: justice for Gabriele'. Similar scenes were witnessed in Livorno. On 5<sup>th</sup> September 2014, seventeen year old Davide Bifulco was accidentally shot by a policeman as he ran a roadblock in Napoli (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 2014). Even though this was not related to a football match, Livorno fans displayed a banner at their match the following week declaring, '05-09-2014 *un altro 'colpo accidentale' in questo stato criminale*' ('05-09-2014 another 'accidental shot' in this criminal state'). Livorno *ultras* were clearly showing solidarity with the deceased, whilst reinforcing the culpability of the state.

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

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

The *ultras* are engaging in the forms of protest that has characterised the movement since the 1970s. Whilst this can reinforce feelings of solidarity amongst participants and engender a collective emotional energy, it does not automatically translate into constructive change. Just as Simmel (1950) noted, sociability can be an end in itself. The continued meeting and engagement

with friends means that individuals want the group to continue. Likewise, Maffesoli (1996) suggests that the social aspect of the group leads to a 'vital instinct' that fuels the continued existence of social groups. In terms of the protests themselves, it does not automatically mean that *ultras* are automatically trying to change the situation; the very continuance of the group is the focus. As Numerato (2014, p.13) argues:

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

The challenge for those *ultras* that do want to change the *repressione*, and for other groups that are actively seeking change, is overcoming this significant problem.

### **Other forms of fandom**

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

Supporters' Trusts could be a way in which the confrontational approach of the state and the *ultras* is broken down. As Russo (2013) argues, 'it will be necessary to work on the football culture to see fan involvement as 'normal', and realise a virtuous model in which the trust

movement could be a solution to this crisis'. Clubs, politicians and the police (as well as fans) need to start learning to co-operate, as Sennett (2012) suggests. The idea for Supporters Trusts originated in the UK in the 1990s out of the Independent Supporters' Association movement in response to a financial crisis affecting many clubs, including Plymouth Argyle, Portsmouth, and Northampton Town. Supporters' Trusts are a relatively young movement in Italy. In a short time, a number of trusts have been established, from myRoma and Verona col Cuore at Serie A clubs to smaller clubs such as Taranto, Arezzo, Modena, Venezia. In 2013, Supporters in Campo was initiated to act as an umbrella organisation for Supporters' Trusts in Italy. This organisation provided the practical and legal support to those establishing trusts. Significantly, the organisation also lays down its guiding principles to make community involvement central (Doidge, 2015). *Campanilismo* can be an asset in these situations as it encourage the pride in the local community.

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

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

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

## **Conclusion**

Civic engagement builds on national and local political traditions. The *ultras* reflect the forms of protest that were originally brought into the stadium in the 1960s and 1970s. These positions have become entrenched in the face of government *repressione*. Supporters in Campo, meanwhile, reflects the new European influence. Fans are engaging in European networks and sharing ideas. The danger is that the group identity becomes the reason and focus of any form of political action, as Numerato (2014) argues. The problem with the *ultras* is that the *Mentalità Ultras* has become an end in itself. The groups are more focused on maintaining what they consider to be an 'authentic' form of fandom, rather than look to the wider governance issues that are impacting all fans.

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

## **Bibliography**

- Agnew, P. (2007) *Forza Italia: The Fall and Rise of Italian Football*, London: Ebury Press.
- Archetti, E. P. (2001) 'The spectacle of a heroic life: the case of Diego Maradona', in D. L. Andrews and Jackson, S. J. (eds.) *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, London: Routledge, pp.151-163.



- Cere, R. (2002) 'Witches of Our Age': Women *Ultras*, Italian Football and the Media. *Sport in Society*, 5, 166-188.
- Cohen, S. (2002) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, London: Routledge.
- Contucci, L. and Francesio, G. (2013) *A Porte Chiusi: Gli Ultimi Giorni Del Calcio Italiano*, Milan:, Sperling & Kupfer.
- Dal Lago, A. (1990) *Descrizione di una battaglia : i rituali del calcio*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Dal Lago, A. & De Biasi, R. (1994) 'Italian Football fans: Culture and Organisation' in Giulianotti, R., Bonney, N. and Hepworth, M. (Eds.) *Football, violence, and social identity*. London, Routledge.
- Doidge, M. (2013) 'The birthplace of Italian communism': political identity and action amongst Livorno fans. *Soccer & Society*, 14 (2), 246-261.
- Doidge, M. (2014) *Anti-racism in European Football: Report to UEFA* Brighton: University of Brighton
- Doidge, M. (2015) *Football Italia: Italian Football in an Era of Globalisation*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Durkheim, E. (1893) *The Division of Labour in Society*, London: Collier Macmillan
- Durkheim, E. (1915) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Ferrari, A. (2008) *Ultras, i ribelli del calcio : quarant'anni di antagonismo e passione*, Bepress.
- Foot, J. (2006) *Calcio : a history of Italian football*, London: Fourth Estate.
- Guerra, N., Imperi, V. and Vardanega, C. (2010) *I poeti della curva*, Roma, Aracne.
- Guschwan, M. (2013) 'La Tessera della Rivolta: Italy's failed fan identification card' *Soccer & Society* 14(2), 215-229
- Habermas, J. (1989) *The Structural Transformation Of The Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into A Category Of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge, Mass: Mit Press.
- Hawkey, I. (2008) Hooligan Hell For Shamed Napoli. *The Times*, October 5, 2008.
- Il Fatto Quotidiano* (2014) 'Davie Bifulco, carabinieri che ha sparato: "Chiedo perdono. Sono inciampato"', 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014 [Online]. [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014]. Available From:

<http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/09/09/davide-bifolco-il-carabiniere-che-ha-sparato-chiedo-perdono-sono-inciampato/1114833>

King, A. (1997) *The End of the Terraces*, Leicester: University of Leicester Press.

King, A. (2003) *The European Ritual*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

*La Repubblica* (2014) 'Malagò: "Frastornato dagli striscioni ultrà in Germania, servono pene esemplari"', 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014 [Online]. [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> February 2015]. Available from: [http://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/05/12/news/malag\\_frastornato\\_dagli\\_striscioni\\_ultr\\_in\\_germania\\_servono\\_pene\\_esemplari-85905690/](http://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/05/12/news/malag_frastornato_dagli_striscioni_ultr_in_germania_servono_pene_esemplari-85905690/).

Lanfranchi, P. and De Biasi, R. (1997) 'Importance of difference: football identities in Italy' in Armstrong, G. and Giulianotti, R. (eds.) *Entering the field: new perspectives on world football*. Oxford, Berg.

Maffesoli, M. (1996) *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, London, Thousand Oaks.

Marchi, V. (2005) *Il Derby Del Bambino Morto: Violenza E Ordine Pubblico Nel Calcio*, Roma, Deriveapprodi.

Melucci, A., Keane, J. & Mier, P. (1989) *Nomads Of The Present: Social Movements And Individual Needs In Contemporary Society*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press.

Millward, P. (2011) *The Global Football League: Transnational Networks, Social Movements and Sport in the New Media Age*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Monti, A. (2014) 'Alla ricerca del talento perduto: cambiare o sparire', *Gazzetta dello Sport* 3<sup>rd</sup> July 214 [Online]. [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014]. Available From: <http://www.gazzetta.it/Calcio/Serie-A/03-07-2014/alla-ricerca-talento-perduto-cambiare-o-sparire-801116678613.shtml>

Nowell-Smith, G. (1979) Television - Football - The World. *Screen*, 19, 45-59.

Numerato, D. (2014) 'Who Says "No to Modern Football?" Italian Supporters, Reflexivity, and Neo-liberalism', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, published online 15<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

Podaliri, C. and Balestri, C. (1998) 'The *Ultras*, racism and football culture in Italy' in Brown, A. (ed.) *Fanatics! power, identity, and fandom in football*. Routledge.

- Porro, N. and Russo, P. (2000) Sport And Society In Italy Today - Berlusconi And Other Matters: The Era Of 'Football-Politics'. *Journal Of Modern Italian Studies*, 5, 348-370.
- Portelli (1993) 'The Rich and the Poor in the Culture of Football' in Redhead, S. (ed.) *The Passion and the Fashion*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse And Revival Of American Community*, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Putnam, R. D., Leonardi, R. & Nanetti, R. (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions In Modern Italy*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Russo, P. (2013) 'Una nuova governance per il calcio? La partecipazione dei tifosi e il ruolo dei supporters' trust', *Supporters Direct* [online]. [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014]. Available from: [www.supporters-direct.org/news-article/una-nuova-governance-per-il-calcio-la-partecipazione-dei-tifosi-e-il-ruolo-dei-supporters-trust](http://www.supporters-direct.org/news-article/una-nuova-governance-per-il-calcio-la-partecipazione-dei-tifosi-e-il-ruolo-dei-supporters-trust).
- Sanga, G. (1996) 'Campane e campanili' in Isnenghi, M. (ed.) *I luoghi della Memoria. Strutture ed eventi dell'Italia unita*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- Sennett, R. (1976) *The Fall Of Public Man*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sennett, R. (2012) *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation*, London: Allen Lane
- Stefanini, M. (2009) *Ultras: identità, politica e violenza nel tifo sportivo da Pompei a Raciti a Sandri*, Milano, Boroli.
- Simmel, G. (1950) *The Sociology Of George Simmel*, London, Free Press Of Glencoe.
- Stott, C. & Reicher, S. (1998) How Conflict Escalates: The Inter-Group Dynamics Of Collective Football Crowd 'Violence'. *Sociology*, 32, 353-377.
- Stott, C. J. T. & Pearson, G. (2007) *Football 'Hooliganism': Policing And The War On The 'English Disease'*, London, Pennant Books.
- Testa, A. (2013) Normalization Of The Exception: Issues And Controversies Of The Italian Counter-Hooliganism Legislation. *Sport In Society*, 16, 151-166.
- Testa, A. and Armstrong, G. (2010) *Football Fascism and Fandom*, London, A&C Black
- Tönnies, Ferdinand (1887). *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Leipzig: Fues's Verlag.

Touraine, A. (1981) *The Voice And The Eye: An Analysis Of Social Movements / Uniform Title: Voix Et Le Regard. English*, Cambridge [Cambridgeshire], New York.

Vliali, G. and Marcotti, G. (2007) *The Italian job: a journey to the heart of two great footballing cultures* London, Bantam

## Endnotes

---

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.asromaultras.org/manifesto.html>