



FOOTBALL FANS IN THE CONTEXT OF NEGATIVE IDENTITY

FANS DE FÚTBOL EN EL CONTEXTO DE LA IDENTIDAD NEGATIVA

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abstract

The article deals with the issues, related to the existence of such a phenomenon of modern times as football fanaticism. The author analyzes the features of sports rooting, in general, and football fanaticism, in particular. The classification of football fans was proposed, and their main characteristics were described. Social markers, having an impact on the fan's life and the existence of the fan group, were determined in the context of negative identity. The role of the phenomenon of football fanaticism in modern culture was considered in the article.

Keywords: negative identity, aggressiveness, philosophy of sport, football fanaticism, anthropology of sport.

El artículo aborda los problemas relacionados con la existencia de un fenómeno de los tiempos modernos como el fanatismo del fútbol. El autor analiza las características del enraizamiento deportivo, en general, y el fanatismo futbolístico, en particular. Se propuso la clasificación de los fanáticos del fútbol y se describieron sus principales características. Los marcadores sociales, que tienen un impacto en la vida de los fanáticos y la existencia del grupo de fanáticos, se determinaron en el contexto de identidad negativa. El papel del fenómeno del fanatismo futbolístico en la cultura moderna fue considerado en el artículo.

Palabras clave: identidad negativa, agresividad, filosofía del deporte, fanatismo futbolístico, antropología del deporte.



Introduction

The problem of identity is one of the most topical issues of our time, relating to each person. In particular, this concerns “negative identity”, which is expressed in the form of participation, or membership of an individual in various kinds of extremist associations, organizations, and groups. Football fanaticism should be considered as an aspect, actualizing this problem. Sport, as a social phenomenon, is becoming increasingly popular. In the modern world, millions of people go in for sport as amateurs or as professionals. However, it is impossible to imagine modern competitions without the presence of fans. In this context, football fans are of the greatest interest for the researchers, scientists, sociologists, philosophers, and psychologists. In our opinion, it is due to the fact, that this phenomenon has a pronounced aggressive character, destructive nature.

Sports competitions have an ancient history, and include two resultant subjects: on the one hand, these are the participants in the competition itself, i.e. athletes and field judges (if any). On the other hand, these are the spectators, without which the competition is incomplete. They bring excitement to the contest, and give it a sense of purpose. Moreover, in the traditional, classical meaning, sport, is the competition of spectators [21, p. 288], which fill the contest with emotions, worry about a participant, or rely on his victory, thereby creating an alternative competition. We do not have the task of studying the phenomenon of rooting, because this is rather the issue of phenomenology, sociology or psychology, depending on the approach. We are more interested in the personality of the fan.

It started from the first competitions, when the so-called phratry took part in the contests, and continued at the Olympic Games, where fans gathered, and they were described by Socrates [12]. Roman gladiators also had fans from both the patrician and the plebs. Sports fanaticism did not exist in a strict sense, although the so-called “hippodrome parties” already had significant social and political influence, largely defining the structure of classical and late Roman society. Their outrages, provocations and riots were much massive than the violence and fights of modern fans. In particular, “Veneti” and “Prasina”, as is commonly known, provoked the so-called “Plebeian War” in 491. The heroes and their fans were also at medieval knightly tournaments. However, characterizing such a distant past, we can speak, in modern terms, only about the fans or, using the terminology of Voltaire, “enthusiasts” [7, p. 84.].

Basic concepts and definitions

In the 60s of the last century, a completely new phenomenon appeared in England among football fans, which subsequently achieved a global reach. This was actually sports fanaticism. In our opinion, it is quite natural that sports fanaticism originated in football. Although, it should be noted, that the presence of ardent fans is typical for any kind of entertainment. For example, horse racing, dog racing, cockfighting and other types of competitions, in which there is a significant number of spectators, who prefer one or another participant. But the peculiarity of football was that it initially had mass character and certain democratic features, i.e. suitable for aristocratic pretentiousness, on the one hand, and common rudeness, on the other.

Massive involvement, rudeness and lack of clear-cut rules had led to the fact, that medieval football was a real urban disaster and was repeatedly banned (by Edward II and Edward III, respectively). However, it successfully resisted the prohibitions and did not lose its great interest and importance. The fact was that originally all the inhabitants of the city took part in the competition. The task of participants was to kick some kind of a ball into the goal, located on the territory of their rivals. It was more like a fight, a mess, which had no rules and restrictions. There was only the excitement in wanting to win, multiplied by general democracy and the desire to have fun. It should be noted, that in such kind of entertainment there were no spectators, but only participants, united by distinct class-territorial markers of “friend or foe”. At this stage, the game was already becoming a factor of identity.

The first football rules were created in 1863 in England. The British tend to take credit for the creation of rules in almost all sports [21, p. 289.]. As soon as the rules became clear, that made it possible to talk about the presence of sport in its modern sense, the fans of this game began to appear – football fans. This term was first introduced into scientific use by I.P. Kulzhinsky [14] in 1969, but it wasn't caught on either in the scientific or in the football environment. The term “football fan” remained more frequently used. In the course of time, its new synonyms began to appear: “fan”, “ultras”, “torcida”, “tifosi” and others in the meaning of a passionate football fan [13, p.150].

What is the difference between a rooter and a fan, and does it exist at all? The term “fan” derived from another term - “fanatic,” which appeared in religious Catholic ideology in the 17th century. It was introduced by the bishop J. Bossuet [4], who called Protestant “fanatics”. However, the etymology of the term “fanaticism” has even more ancient roots. Roman authors applied the term “fanatici” to the votaries of Eastern deities, and this term derived from “fanum” - the sanctuary. In other words, fanaticism originated in a religious



environment, although it subsequently has been spread in secular culture. In any case, it covers its irrational areas, preserving some sacred meaning. The outbreaks of fanaticism lead to very serious consequences, which Voltaire warned about, when he wrote that fanaticism “breaks all social ties” [6, p. 84.]. In other words, it has a tremendous force, destroying society. Thus, the presence of negative in combination with a certain identity can be considered as a key component of fanaticism.

The identity is formed on the basis of social values, but in the absence of such a framework, all ties of the individual with his environment are destroyed. As a result, denial itself becomes a value. “The acquisition of personal identity through denial, the acquisition of negative personal identity leads to marginalization or mutation, one of which in this context is extremism. Therefore, we can say, that the tendency to extremist views originates from the field of personal identity, and the inability (or unwillingness) to find it in another way” [3, p. 29]. The mechanism of formation of negative personal identity is directly connected with the destruction of the individual. “Negative personal identity characterizes a person according to the principle “against someone”, it is acquired “from the opposite”, based on the ideals of hostility, rejection, aggressiveness and resistance. As a result, negative identity simplifies the world, reducing its multidimensionality and diversity to unilinearity, primitivism and fanaticism. In fact, this transforms into extremism and terrorism” [9, p. 30]. The opposition to society is performed through the aggravation of class, cultural, religious, national and ethnic contradictions in society. The latter can also be created artificially through mass negative identification. Thus, negative identity can be defined as a technology of destruction of public and state foundations on the inside, developing in the “mental sphere”. These characteristics are quite applicable to the environment of football fans.

It has already been mentioned that the movement of fanaticism in football was born in England in the 1960s. In itself, this movement is heterogeneous, first of all, relative to the worldview, as well as cultural and anthropological characteristics. This thesis is confirmed by the different behavior of football fans, as representatives of a specific subculture with certain characteristics. For example, these are the internal worldview characteristics, connected with the choice of an idol, the use of the pronoun “We” in a conversation at the mention of an object of rooting, identifying the speaker with the object; as well as the external manifestations: slang, hymns, symbols, specific clothes, most often made in the same color scheme, as the team-idol, the internal hierarchical structure of the movement and many other things. There are many attempts to study the

structure of football supporters, in general, and football fans, in particular (A.A. Avladeev [1], E.V. Ulybina [19], M.B. Fefelov [20] and others). We consider the broadest possible classification, proposed by one of the leading researchers-popularizers of the national football fanaticism D. Lekuh. The author calls it the fan “Table of Ranks” [15, pp. 84-86]:

1. “Slippers” – is the most common category of fans, but despised among other groups of fans. It includes those people, who do not go to the stadium, but watch football and support the team at home, in slippers, in front of the TV.
2. Internet fighters. This group includes fans, who like to discuss the football on the Internet. They are distinguished by omniscience and maximum aggressiveness on various sports sites. Usually they don't go beyond verbal exchanges, and they don't go to matches very often.
3. “Kuzmichi” (beer bellies). Starting with this group, we are already dealing directly with those, who visit the stadiums as fans. Outwardly, these are fat, good-natured, half-drunk guys with beer bellies, who just like football as a sight. At the stadium, they eat a lot of sunflower seeds, blow the pipes, sometimes they jump up and shout. They are unorganized, law-abiding and harmless.
4. Scarfers. This is the most common category of “peaceful” football fans, with which this concept is most often associated. Their distinctive feature is the obligatory presence of a fan scarf “rose”. Most scarfers are either young people or middle-aged people, who eventually pass into the category of “Kuzmichi”. Most often they are law-abiding citizens.
5. “Karlany”. The name of this group originates with the notion “maneen, midget”. It includes young people, representing the first level of organized fans. They are daring, insolent, often ill-mannered adolescents, up to 20 years. In fact, these are people, about whom Yu.A. Trifanov writes. The author notes that the average age of a person, who falls under the influence of a fan subculture, usually coincides with the period of pubertal development [18]. It is the impact of the socio-psychological and physiological transformations, typical for this age, that force adolescents to look for a reason to prove gender identity and thereby socialize [25]. They find the necessary outlet in fanaticism, but, being more interested in own problems, they consider rooting only as a reason for splash of hormones. Often, the representatives of this category of fans are more like scangers, and sometimes they are scangers, just entertaining themselves by participating in football and especially in football hooliganism. They are extremely dangerous for everyone.
6. Ultras – is the elite of the “peaceful wing” of the fan movement. These are people, who try to attend all the “home” matches and, if possible, to



go on trips. All songs, chants, banners and fire shows are created by ultras, the most organized and responsible part of the movement. They put all their energy and excitement into a football show at the stadium. Usually, they only make noise on the tiers, and do no harm.

7. Casuals or hools (football hooligans) – is the elite of the movement. They are strong, sporty guys. They are included in small associations-firms. During the match, as a rule, they "stand" along with the ultras. After the match, these guys do completely different things. Their main ideology is the following: "We stand for the honor of the club not only at the stadium." Very tiny number of people are included in this group (the "fighting" members of the "hooligan company" rarely exceeds 100 people, and only really big clubs "can afford" five or six "companies"). Each person from the "foundation" of a company is a potential troublemaker, who is capable of creating disorders wherever the movement needs them. They never wear the "colors" of the club, preferring unpretentious, fashionable clothes from expensive brands.

Thus, only the last two categories are traditionally referred to the notion "football fan". Both the rooters and the fans watch sports competitions, experiencing equally strong emotions. Peoples go to the matches for the emotions. However, the fan is more interested in the aesthetic side of the action. He watches the competition and wants one team or competitor to become a winner, i.e. he supports them. He is the part of a team and does not see himself as a separate force.

Methods

There are several reasons for choosing a sports idol. First of all, people support the one, who, in the opinion of the fan, performs technical and tactical actions best of all, according to the rules, established in this sports competition, i.e. plays. Secondly, people support the sportsmen-compatriots, who represent either the small motherland (city, region, republic), or the country as a whole. In this case, the person, who has no relation to the sport, acting simply as a patriot, can be the fan [20]. This happens most often during the games of the national team. The fan, of course, will be upset if his team loses. However, in the great scheme of things, he supports not only the team, but the sport as a whole, its aesthetics. Here we are dealing with a positive identity.

Thus, summing up the classification listed above, we can speak about the last three groups in the context of negative identity. The principles, proposed by the American researcher and psychologist E. Erikson, studying the problem of identity formation, can be applied in this case. He defines 4 aspects of identity in the formation of a person: Individuality, Identity and integrity, Unity

and synthesis and Social solidarity, noting that the identity of a person can be only in the context of social solidarity [24; pp. 218-219]. Therefore, in our opinion, the age of most football fans, which covers the period from 15 to 25 years [18], is associated with the period of self-search and recognition in society, because the identity is connected with the process of growing up, the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The main feature of the fan is his desire to enjoy the sports event and to get positive emotions from the virtuoso, aesthetic actions of the sportsmen, and the victory of the team, which he supports. As we have already established, the category of rooting implies a certain division of society. We propose to make this division according to the traditional approach of "friend or foe". The content of the category "foes" is of the greatest interest. In this case, it is formed on axiological basis. Having conducted the sociological study on the social identity of fans, Yu. A. Trifonov determined that this category had the following content: "the fans of the teams from other cities" (30.5%), "law enforcement agencies: the police (policemen)" (25%), "people of different nationalities, national minorities (the Gypsies)" (15%), "criminals (gangsters, convicts, felons)" (12.5%), "authorities, individual representatives of the authorities (officials)" (9.5%), "people of certain age, generation (retired, old people)" (5.5%) [18, p. 90].

In the fan environment there are many social and cultural groups, which can be regarded as "foes" and sometimes hostile. And, as can be seen from the study, not all of these groups relate directly to football and fans. The events, taking place in the sports arena, are of no particular significance for the fan. This is a secondary phenomenon. Firstly, he is interested only in the result, which is beneficial to him, since this result is a reason-argument in the confrontation with other fans. Secondly, he is concerned about his personally participation in these events. In the latter case, the more active is the fan, the better. Therefore, the fan takes active part in rooting not only at the stadium, but, most importantly, in the "events" outside of it. The presence of non-sports, and in relation to football, the out-of-football aspects of the fan's life defines the term and the phenomenon of football hooliganism.

Thus, the associations, demonstrating adherence to certain colors, "companies" do not exist without the image of the enemy. It is vital for them to have the contending group, on the one hand, dividing their views with the aim to come into conflict, to have a fight, and on the other hand, the presence of rival "colors". It is the presence of the "enemy" ideologeme that distinguishes the fan movement from the ordinary rooting. Considering the concept of L. Gudkov on the "enemy" ideologeme, we can agree that the



presence of a foe, real, or imaginary, stimulates the forces, which can be called opposing. The presence of the enemy is inevitable for the existence of sports fanaticism. L. Gudkov notes that the violence itself (whatever its nature or intensity) cannot ensure the preservation and reproduction of a repressive regime for a long time [8, p. 7].

However, this can not be applied to sports fanaticism, since its main feature is aggressiveness. A fanatic always needs an enemy, he always has to kill someone, to execute [22, 23]. He considers himself the bearer of true knowledge and is intolerant of other opinions, calling them either enemy or heretical. According to N.A. Berdyaev, the egocentrism of fanatic of any idea, any theory, is expressed in the fact that he does not see the human person, is inattentive to the personal human way, he cannot establish any relation to the world of personalities, to the living concrete human world. The fanatic knows only the idea, he does not know the person, even if he fights for the idea of the person [2, p. 67]. Sports fans have the same features. Thus, we come to the understanding that the basis of fanaticism is some personal, egocentric component, which should be attributed to negative identity.

A fan is a person, who aspires to exalt himself through the object of his worship, and in case of fanaticism we are always talking about some kind of worship. For fans, the following imperative is quite acceptable: "There are "me" and "not me". All "not me" should become "me". Moreover, the process of transition from "not me" to "me" can be performed by any means, and the most revealing and effective of them is violence. That is why fanaticism, in general, and sports, in particular, is so aggressive. The presence of violence in the fan environment is its main feature. The negative here is viewed by the participants as positive.

As a phenomenon, football hooliganism is the violations, performed by the representatives of one group (the company, supporting a certain club) in relation to the people from another group, i.e. the company, supporting any other club, law enforcement officers and even civilians of the city or the country, in whose territory the opposing team is geographically located. These actions in relation to other fans can be considered as a way of existence of a certain culture. We have seen something similar, for example, in the chivalrous tradition. We don't have the task to consider any aspects of violence in football hooliganism [6, 11, 16], because this is the material for another study. We only state the fact that football fanaticism is a movement, which propagates physical violence and does not exist without it. However, like any other subculture, the fan movement has its own ideology, its own rules, which are designed to ensure and fill its existence [19, 20]. The common

fight, in which there is no clear marker "friend or foe", isn't so exciting, because it loses the competitive and game character. In our view, it is important, as participation in fan confrontations is a special kind of sport.

We propose to identify some common features, typical for the fan movement. First, it is the presence of a team, for which the fan is fighting. The choice of the team is not explained by any universal laws and, in our opinion, is conditioned only by the coincidence of circumstances, preceding the choice. The person can't change the team. In the fan movement, the person who has made such a fault is called contemptuously "toad". Secondly, it is direct participation in violent actions. Only theoretical reasoning is not enough. You must go and fight. It is the number of fights, in which the fan participates, or the company to which he belongs, that determines the authority. The opponent is also important, and the higher is its authority (reputation, rating), the higher raises the own rating. Thirdly, it is the role, played by the individual fan, in a movement or in a company. Among the main roles are the following:

- leader - is the person to whom the company is directly subordinated. He is the most authoritative representative, having a solid, long-term experience of participation in football hooliganism;
- "basis" – these are the most reputable, proven fighters-troublemakers. Among the basis, there are the representatives of the so-called "first line", i.e. the fighters, standing in front of the battle formation, and taking the brunt of casualties. Often the result of the collision depends on their behavior and decisive actions;
- "sub-basis" – there are young fans at the testing stage. They are often used for performing insignificant orders. They participate in frivolous collisions and in the conflicts, involving many people;
- "scouts" - these are reconnaissance men, who collect information about the location, composition and plans of the enemy. This is the separate category of fans, who need not participate in fights and disorders.

Analyzing the few literature on the fan issue [5, 6, 11, 16, etc.], it can be noted, that the fan battles can have several scenarios.

1. Planned action, so-called "meeting", with a strictly agreed number of participants, in a certain place, according to certain rules (for example, do not beat to death).
2. Only disorders, the purpose of which is to intimidate the residents of the city, where the team come to play, together with the fans, supporting it.
3. There are also disorders on the tiers, when the fans of one team, without waiting for the end of the match, put up a fight during the game, right at the stadium.



4. The most extensive fan action is so-called "catch". This is a carefully planned operation, aimed at the early detection of the place of gathering of the enemy team and making an attack. It requires considerable, long-term preparation and significantly strengthens the authority of the organizing company.

Conclusions

Like any other social reality, the fan subculture has its own internal rules, certain conditions of the game. These include the ethical rules, contained in the so-called "Code of Honor" of football hooligans. In our opinion, this Code has not a strict, but rather recommendatory value, like the code of pirates. Based on the study of some fan sites, we defined some general aspects of its content [10]. First of all, it is emphasized that a fan is a person, in some way related to football, but who pretends to the highest values, such as honor and conscience. One of the favorite topics of the fans is honor. Sometimes it is replaced by the term "reputation". Reputation is a kind of rating of the company, to which the fan belongs, and depends on how "well and right" the members of this company behave towards other fans and, accordingly, how much respect they have. The fan must show an example of honesty, courage and patriotism in his behavior. And patriotism is understood not only as allegiance to the motherland, but also as the loyalty to the club.

When participating in the events of football hooliganism, one should respect his opponent, avoid, if possible, deliberate infliction of grievous harm to his health. It is also not good to denude of mobile phones, money or things, belonging to defeated opponents. In no case, you shouldn't write a statement for the police on injuries, inflicted to you. This is considered extremely unacceptable, and adversely affects the reputation of both the fan and the company, to which he belongs. The people, who are not related to football hooliganism, shouldn't be engaged in fights and "actions". Today, football fanaticism is gaining great popularity, due to the large number of films, promoting fan movements. There are such films as "Hooligans of Green Street", "Football Factory", "Okolofutbola", etc.

Also a significant number of books are published about the fans and their lives, memories of the participants of various fan events, etc. The number of fans is growing. According to some researchers, the number of football fans in Russia amounts to 65-70 thousand people [17]. At the same time, it should be noted, that the fans don't expand their groups with the help of any advertising. It is quite difficult to get into the group of fans. But this activity and the actions of

fans are so compelling, that they attract more and more followers. According to D. Lekuh, the information that football fans recruit normal young people into their ranks, force them to fight, misleading and seducing young people from the right way of living, is completely unreliable and is just a myth [15, pp. 79-80].

We should agree with this point of view, because even getting into the so-called "sub-basis" of top hooligan "companies" is an extremely long and complex process. And for an ordinary fighter it takes an average from three to four years to get to the basis [15, p. 80]. There are very rare exceptions. Not everyone, who wishes, can pass this way, but only the best of the best. This is due to the participation in real and quite tough fights, in which many things depend on your fellow. Therefore, football hooligans don't want to involve into their ranks people, who are not proven, they even have to "phase out" young people, spoiling for a fight. For unprepared person, even if he is physically strong, even if he is engaged in combat sports, it is rather difficult to show himself successfully without certain skills. Mutual assistance is especially important here, and if a person is not ready physically (i.e. he will "fall down" in a collision), either morally (he will run away if scared), then the people who stand with him will suffer, because the opponent will have a numerical advantage. Another myth about fans and football hooligans is that the members of these groups are the children from dysfunctional families, eternally drunk, ill-educated vocational students, poorly understanding human speech, from the industrial outskirts of the city.

In fact, according to D. Lekuh, no one is so happy about such image of football hooligans as football hooligans themselves. For them, this is, firstly, another reason for contempt for the "office monkeys", and secondly, a great way to disguise [15, p. 78]. The appearance of a classic fan, belonging to the "elite of the movement", is drawn as follows: neat, expensive and fashionably dressed, clean, often well-educated and rich strong guys, absolutely sober, as a judge, before and during the "hooligan actions". They have the task of being maximally invisible to others. And let the common herd, together with the police, continue to seek and hate "uneducated thugs from the city suburbs" [15, p. 79].

One of the world's leading experts in the field of football fanaticism D. Brimson says that the secret of the formula for true fanaticism is "fashion + football" [5, p. 3]. The term "casuals", which is used in relation to football hooligans, is taken from the terminology of fashion, and is derived from the word "casual", i.e. comfortable, universal clothing. We have already written that fans prefer to dress in clothes of famous brands. The most popular brands in the fan environment include Stone Island, Barberry, Fred Perry, Lacoste.



Moreover, Stone Island clothes are definitely associated with football hooliganism. It should be noted, that the price of clothes of these brands is very high. This confirms the thesis that football hooligans don't belong to the class of fringe elements. And in general, speaking about the financial matter, it should be noted, that it is quite expensive to belong to the fan subculture, since the cost of tickets, the purchase of branded "fan clothes", trips with the team, especially abroad, require significant funds. Therefore, the fan, who has visited all the matches of his team in a season, is highly respected, and such an event is called in the fan terminology "to gain gold season".

Thus, it can be noted that in modern sports there are two main categories of people among the supporters of sports competitions. These are the rooters and the fans. The rooters get emotions from the sports event itself, and the fans - from their own participation in it. In addition to the above characteristics, it should be said, that sports fanaticism develops by analogy with a number of other subcultures, exclusively in urban environments. The reasons of this phenomenon should be found in the urban subculture itself, as a phenomenon, to a certain extent progressive, fashionable, and also requiring free time, afforded by the urban lifestyle. The main distinguishing feature of fanaticism is its aggressive, negative nature. Sports fanaticism expresses itself as a definite subculture with its own characteristic features and anthropo-cultural peculiarities of its followers, which can be considered and characterized in the context of negative identity.

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