

Andrew Hodges

Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb; NEWFELPRO/Marie Curie Scholar
ahodges@ffzg.hr

The Left and the Rest? Fan Cosmologies and Relationships between Celtic's Green Brigade and Dinamo Zagreb's Bad Blue Boys

Through examining ethnographic material alongside a forum discussion on the website *ultrastifo*, this paper relates fan solidarities occasionally asserted between certain members of Green Brigade (Celtic FC) and the Bad Blue Boys (NK Dinamo Zagreb) to what I term fan cosmologies. I first describe my theoretical positioning with respect to fan activist groups and initiatives, before making some notes concerning the two fan groups' political contexts. I then consider the empirical material, concluding with a brief discussion of fan cosmologies as an approach to studying football fan groups anthropologically.

Key words: football, ultras, fan solidarities, cosmology.

Левица и остали? Навијачке космологије и везе између Селтикових и Динамових навијачких група

У овом раду фокусирам се на појаву навијачке солидарности између припадника навијачке групе *Green Brigade* фудбалског клуба Селтик из Глазгова, и групе *Bad Blue Boys*, навијача загребачког Динама, дефинишући тај феномен кроз термин *навијачких космологија*. Основни извор за ово истраживање био је етнографски материјал прикупљен на форумским дискусијама на Интернет страници *ultrastifo*. У раду прво дефинишем моју теоријску позицију у односу на навијачки активизам, а затим објашњавам релевантан политички контекст у оквиру кога функционишу ове навијачке групе. У наредном делу рада, фокусирам се на емпиријски материјал, закључујући га кратком дискусијом на тему навијачких космологија као приступа у антрополошким и социолошким студијама навијачких група.

Кључне речи: фудбал, *ultras*, навијачка солидарност, космологија.

Introduction

“Dinamo svetinja”
(*Dinamo is Sacred – BBB*)

“Život a ne furka”
(*For Real, not for Show – BBB Trnsko*)¹

Many fan groups, and especially those which draw on ultras² modes of organising and traditions often refer to following a team in a highly emotive and passionate way. In Zagreb, this sometimes includes the use of religious metaphors and the sacred, as in the above quote. Such talk constitutes both a register and form of socialising which is used on match days to create a cohesive group performance (a ‘show’). It may also relate to an intensive emotional experience for certain fans, who follow the team with an enduring passion, deep emotion and commitment which is experienced ‘for real’, as the second quote suggests. If such talk and fan practices are taken at face value, football fandom for some might be understood to constitute a ‘cosmology’, the term cosmology referring to a deep, ordered cultural system, both ‘more and less than religion’ (Barnard and Spencer 1996, 129) and/or ‘an everchanging, dynamic set of ordering stories’ (Malkki, 1995, 244) through which a sense of self and Other is generated. This article seeks to explore this claim and its implications. The first, theoretical section analyses how certain modes of fan engagement might be considered ‘cosmological’. The second, empirical section, seeks to explore ‘fan cosmology’ through examining the relationship between certain fans of Glasgow Celtic’s *Green Brigade* and Dinamo Zagreb’s *Bad Blue Boys*. Such a friendship might appear unlikely on first inspection, given the broad associations the two fan groups have with the political left (Green Brigade-Celtic) and right (BBB-Dinamo) respectively. Yet, as we shall see, other factors also come into play. The broader aim of this text is to shed light on the relationship between political activism and football fandom through examining how fans categorise themselves and Others. This includes examining how political ideologies and other commitments play a role in influencing the alignments and alliances fans draw with members of other groups.

¹ The literal translations are ‘Dinamo Sanctity’ and ‘Life, not Fashion’ respectively. The first quote regularly features in messages displayed at matches and graffiti. The second quote was a piece of graffiti written in the Zagreb neighbourhood Trnsko, around 2012.

² For an explanation of the ultras movement, see Roversi and Balestri (2000). BBB arguably combines elements of both UK hooligan and Italian ultra traditions – whilst their ‘self image’ is more closely associated with hooligan aesthetics, their modes of organising (e.g. having membership cards, social centres, match day choreography, leaders (*vođe*), is closer to the Italian ultras tradition.

Self-positioning and Research Methodology

This article has emerged in and through discussions with members of a Zagreb based left wing fan group named White Angels Zagreb (hereon WAZ). I have been a member of the group from 2011, switching between activist involvement (see Becker 1967; Scheper-Hughes 1995; D’Andrade 1995) and participant observation. The ethnographic vignette discussed is therefore informed by a thorough knowledge of the Zagreb political, subcultural and football fan scene, a practical knowledge of the regional football fan scene and left wing activist tradition through participation in WAZ and in radical left and anti-fascist initiatives in Zagreb and Manchester. I have lived in Zagreb for a total of five years and have both a commitment to WAZ and a wider interest in BBB as a Zagreb based fan group. In addition to ethnographic observations, this article also analyses online forum posts from the website *ultrastifo*,³ a website popular amongst many fans with an interest in the ultras scene, where fans who support and/or have an interest in various clubs engage in discussions primarily in English and based on ultras modes of support. I came to hear about the website through involvement in WAZ and there is a certain amount of subcultural capital associated with photos being posted on this website. As WAZ is left wing and anti-nationalist, a rarity in the regional post-Yugoslav fan scene, comments about and pictures of WAZ are often followed by abusive remarks on the forum. I approach the forum material in an anthropological fashion, using my knowledge of the regional contexts and fan practices in interpreting the comments made. Whilst I would not regard following online practices as ‘ethnography’ as there is no full bodily immersion in a set of practices, the real time focus of forums resonates with the central concerns of ethnography.⁴

This article also concerns the relationship between the political left and right wing orientations amongst fan groups, linking to a nascent literature on left wing ultras groups in Europe (Doidge 2013; Totten 2015; Totten 2014; Daniel and Kassimeris 2013; McManus 2013; McDougall 2013). My experiences in Zagreb suggest that left-wing ultras groups such as WAZ often focus on *football as a vehicle for political activism*, given the sport’s widespread popularity, historical affinity with working class traditions (see Kennedy 2013a; 2013b), ability to mobilise large numbers of people and its concrete nature (as opposed to abstract political discussions and a close connection with ‘the academy’, which describe the worst stereotypes of certain Marxist traditions – Graeber 2004). As for those promoting right wing and/or nationalist views, it is rather the case that nationalism is *a variety of politics which has a particular affinity with football fandom*. Such affinities relate, for example, to the emphasis on group identity and belonging, and the assertion of a strong emotional connection (e.g. with a club or a ‘homeland’). This is a point the sociologist Lalić discussed when describing a typology of participants in a fan group named Torcida connected with the Croatian club HNK Hajduk Split during

³ <http://www.ultras-tifo.net/> (accessed on 5/1/2016).

⁴ See also Millward (2008) for a discussion of methodological issues concerning the use of e-zines as data sources.

the early nineties. He stated that ‘the basic motive of (right wing) political activist-fans is that they understand fan groups as an optimal instrument for the promotion of their political commitments and the stadium as being a particularly convenient environment for this.’ (Lalić and Pilić 2011, 120)⁵ This suggests that left-wing fan-activists are likely to be particularly focused on *doing politics through football*. The actions of other fan groups may be viewed as problematic from a left-wing perspective, in that they engage with symbols and everyday practices which reflect an increasing dominance of everyday nationalist symbolism in the mainstream (see Brentin 2016). More specifically, I suggest that this relates to a stress on order and consistency often present amongst the radical left in their categorisations of social reality, which brings us on to questions of ‘cosmology’.

Categories and Cosmologies

Two understandings of cosmology were mentioned in the introduction. The first refers to some kind of all-encompassing ‘ordered cultural system’ understood as ‘both more and less than religion’ (Barnard and Spencer 1996, 129). This definition has affinities with functionalist approaches, in which one may speak of ‘the cosmology of the x’, where x typically refers to a cultural or ‘ethnic’ group, such as the Azande. The second definition refers to ‘an everchanging, dynamic set of ordering stories’ (Malkki, 1995, 244). If a cultural system is assumed as a referent to the ordering stories, then the two understandings may be compatible. However, for Malkki there is no referent; rather the organising of the world into a mosaic of ‘national cultures’ – national cosmology – is understood as an act which humans have pursued under specific historical circumstances, as she states in her explicit critique of the earlier definition. We can then ask whether political ideologies, such as nationalism or socialism might be considered to be ‘cosmologies’. This is an issue Levi-Strauss raised in his discussion of the ‘order of orders’ where he elaborates a distinction between ‘lived-in’ orders, such as kinship, economic relations etc. and ‘thought-of’ orders, encompassing myth and religion:

These ‘thought-of’ orders cannot be checked against the experience to which they refer, since they are one and the same as this experience. Therefore, we are in the position of studying them only in their relationships with the other types of ‘lived-in’ orders. The ‘thought-of’ orders are those of myth and religion. The question may be raised whether, in our own society, political ideology does not belong to the same category. (Lévi-Strauss 2008, 313)

Lévi-Strauss’s ‘thought-of’ orders might be re-described as meta-reflections on or rationalisations of a perceived order. From a culturalist perspective, if political ideologies, including Marxism, were understood as cosmologies, this would imply an understanding of them as an ordered system of beliefs with a

⁵ The original states: “osnovni je motiv navijača-političkog aktivista da shvaća navijačku skupinu kao optimalan instrument za promicanje svojih političkih opredjeljenja i stadion kao okružje iznimno povoljno za to.” The translation is my own.

religious component, perhaps constituting a kind of Durkheimian social whole. I suggest that Mary Douglas hinted at this in an interview when she stated that “even if you are a communist, you can be very orderly, indeed.”⁶ We can then speak of the extent to which political ideologies in different contexts have a more or less cosmological component. I suggest that in the (post-)Yugoslav context, right wing political movements often entail ‘national cosmology’, whilst left-wing political movements have, to varying degrees, an ‘anti-fascist cosmology’, grounded in Partisan resistance to Nazi occupation during the Second World War. Like national cosmology, such narratives have a pronounced moral component and oppositional character. As Malkki described the concept of mythico-history based on her research with Hutu identified refugees:

The Hutu history, however, went far beyond merely recording events. It represented, not only a description of the past, nor even merely an evaluation of the past, but a subversive recasting and reinterpretation of it in fundamentally moral terms. In this sense, it cannot be described accurately as either history or myth. It was what can be called a *mythico-history*. (Malkki 1995, 54)

From a perspective grounding the importance of *history* rather than *culture* in shaping social change, Marxism could not be considered a ‘cosmology’ and ‘national cosmology’, i.e. the division of social reality into a mosaic of nations, could only be considered a temporary state of affairs. Following Malkki, this is the view I advocate.

Researching Fan Cosmology

The two quotes at the start of this paper emphasise how religious metaphors and comments describing football fan participation as a ‘total’ form of social participation which generates meaning for those involved suggests that – if we take such comments at face value – we might speak of ‘fan cosmology’ in the Zagreb context, which begs the question of how one might evaluate ‘cosmological’ claims made by fans as ‘an ever-changing, dynamic set of ordering stories’ (Malkki, 1995, 244). Malkki identified violence as a key experience which cements the production of mythico-historical narratives and an identification with a national collective, on the basis of her ethnographic experiences with ‘Hutu’ refugees in Tanzania. In a similar vein, as the sociologist Anthony King (2001) has described with respect to Manchester United Supporters, and I have discussed with respect to WAZ (Hodges 2016), talk about violent encounters plays a key role in cementing collective identifications with fan groups. To what extent, then, do participants in fan groups experience participation as cosmological, where the religious component and deep sense of encompassment is understood as an effect of certain types of categorising practices synthesised through particular experiences, which include violence or the

⁶ <https://www.princeton.edu/prok/issues/1-3/interview/> (accessed on 06/01/16).

threat of violence? I suggest the following research questions as inroads into exploring ‘fan cosmology’:

- (i) *Mythico-history*: In what ways is a fan group’s ‘mythico-history’ established? Is there one ‘ordering story’, or several competing narratives? What events feature in the mythico-history? Is tradition understood as important? What role does violence play? Are religious metaphors and/or identifications used by members of the fan groups?
- (ii) *Collective identification*: Are strong collective identifications present amongst group members? What kinds of fan rituals are present?
- (iii) *Others*: How do group members categorise themselves and others? How do they relate to other groups on local/regional/global levels? How do they interpret the positioning and actions of other groups? How sharp are the boundaries asserted between groups and how are such boundaries maintained?

We can then situate fan discourses and self-understandings onto a continuum, wherein those with a strong cosmological component would have (i) a consistently reproduced ‘mythico-history’ of the group, stressing tradition, with a moral component and the regular use of religious metaphors, metaphors of the sacred and of cleanliness and impurity; (ii) a strong collective identification with the group and a sharply bounded repertoire of themes associated with collective identification; and (iii) the assertion of sharp and strongly recognisable boundaries between selves and others. Now I move to consider the case study, first providing some relevant background information.

Celtic and Dinamo Fans: Some Notes on the Political Context

Celtic fans have strong links to the Irish immigrant community and their descendants living in Glasgow, who over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have championed the cause of Irish nationalism and ‘home rule’, challenging the British state’s presence in Ireland. As Hayes (2006, 6) described, ‘The Celtic Football Club, as the product of the Irish diaspora in the west of Scotland, remains rooted in a specific ethnic and religious configuration, and the club acts as a pivotal source of cultural identity.’ Irish and Scottish movements for national liberation have several features in common with Croatian movements. Both relate to being, or having been, part of a larger political collective in which an anti-imperialist narrative emerged towards the respective centres, understood as Serbia and England respectively, with criticism placed on centralisation in Belgrade and Westminster/London. In addition, both states are relatively small compared to their bigger neighbours and religious differences form a contrast in both cases, between Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity (Serbia), or Protestantism (England). Solidarities may be asserted on the grounds of these similarities, and indeed, members of WAZ had an awareness of this: as one friend commented on his frequently wearing a Celtic hoodie to games, ‘if I wear this I’m safe, I can wear something left-wing, I won’t have any problems, because its Catholic too’.

However, significant differences also exist. Whilst all national liberation movements assert the existence of a group identity – albeit in different and more or less exclusive ways⁷, and in ways which may be culturally essentialist or not, such movements, in taking group identity as a frame, differ in the extent to which working class solidarities are implicated in dominant understandings of such group identities. Whilst working class solidarities⁸ form the basis of dominant understandings of Scottish and Irish independence struggles (see Bradley, 1995: 56-7), seeking liberation from a former imperialist power, in the post-Yugoslav case, mainstream Croatian nationalism has no such progressive possibilities, at present based on a separatist ‘national identity’ relating to imputed (Central) European-Balkan civilizational hierarchies (Bakić-Hayden 1995), or presumed civilizational circles (e.g. see Peti-Stantić 2008), amidst a distancing from legacies associated with a socialist union, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Significant factions of the BBB champion Croatian nationalism, the recent formation of an independent Croatian state and/or the shift towards capitalism and parliamentary democracy. Some members of BBB participated collectively in paramilitary groups who operated during what is commonly referred to in Croatia as the ‘homeland war’ (*domovinski rat*), which fought for secession from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see Sindbæk 2013). Anti-communist positions, which as we shall see, are asserted by some fans, are connected with Croatia’s position in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was presumed by Croatian nationalists, amongst others, to be a favourable arrangement for Serbian identified individuals. During the late eighties, the regional fan scene became increasingly politicised and acquired a more nationalist dimension, not only in Croatia but in Serbia and other post-Yugoslav states as well.

Finally, in the Croatian state context, a high level of politicisation amongst football fans exists, including widespread criticism of football institutions such as the Croatian Football Federation (*Hrvatski Nogometni Savez*). I suggest this politicisation relates to the context of recent war and capitalist transition – including critiques of crony capitalism, a high degree of fan group organisation, the consequences of human rights abuses on the part of the police towards fans (see CMS, 2014) and media campaigns criticizing hooliganism (a situation parallel to the UK in the eighties, yet in the UK there was not the same level of fan politicization). The recognition of common ‘fan’ struggles, I suggest, leads to a higher degree of generalised ‘fan solidarity’, a form of solidarity associated with being a football fan and perhaps associated with participation in a fan subculture (see Brentin, 2014). This also related in Zagreb to a small overlap between left and right wing punk subcul-

⁷ For a more inclusive example, see Urla's (2012) discussion of Basque language and culture activists.

⁸ Indeed, the Dinamo-Celtic match took place months after an extremely narrow Scottish independence referendum in which a ‘no’ vote narrowly won. Scottish independence had significant support from various leftist movements, not always on the basis of a commitment to a nationalist identity politics, but often on the basis of a strategic ‘yes’ vote designed to promote political changes in which a progressive class politics might grow, a possibility which, at the time of the referendum, was more difficult to achieve when remaining as part of the UK.

tures,⁹ the overlap relating not only to code-sharing between subcultures but also to the relatively small size of Zagreb and consequent personalisation of many relations which may not be present in larger European cities with similar subcultures such as Berlin – in my experience, within certain established boundaries, once one had a ‘reputation’ in one’s neighbourhood, this would be tolerated up to a certain point by those with different views and politics.

The Dinamo vs. Celtic Match

In December 2014 the Celtic reserve team came to play against Dinamo in a Europa league match.¹⁰ Many Celtic fans took the opportunity to spend several days in Zagreb and could regularly be seen throughout the city centre in the days preceding and following the match, particularly in the city centre bars and coffee shops. I had made plans to attend the game with other members of WAZ, some of whom had been out drinking the night before in an Irish pub in the city centre with members of Green Brigade and some other fans from the leftist fan scene who had travelled down from Germany, where a strong left-wing activist football scene exists with a network spanning across Europe. In the Irish pub, a small number of tickets had been available to purchase for the Celtic (away) stand, but the members of WAZ who had been there had not managed to procure enough tickets for all of us. As I and one other member of our group did not have a ticket guaranteed, we moved towards the entrance to the away stand and it was suggested I buy tickets as I have a UK passport, based on the assumption that ability to pass as a legitimate ‘fan’ for a team was easier when one possessed the same citizenship (UK) as the team playing.

We arrived at the ticket booth by the entrance to the away stand to find they weren’t selling tickets anymore and stood for a moment, deciding what to do next. Those with tickets entered the away stand. Asking around, I and the remaining member, Ante¹¹, found out that tickets were still on sale for the Dinamo stands. Ante, who spoke English with an Irish accent and supported Celtic as well as the IRA struggle, and was somewhat of an outlier in WAZ because of his support of a nationalist cause, suggested we go find a pub to watch the game, but I insisted on getting tickets for the Dinamo stand. We quickly ran round to the other side of the stadium and queued up for home tickets. I wasn’t sure whether they would let me through as a UK citizen because of the above-mentioned logic, but I showed the people in the ticket office my Croatian residency card and we had no problems buy-

⁹ The concept of a right-wing punk subculture might sound strange to those unfamiliar with the context. In Croatia, punks, skins and football hooligan subcultures frequently overlap and right wing punks resonate with subcultures such as Nazi skinheads in Germany. For the relations between punk and football subcultures in Croatia, see Perasović (2012); Perasović (2001). For an overview of punk subcultures in post-socialist contexts, see Pilkington (2012).

¹⁰ A footballing overview of the game is available at <http://www.bbc.com/sport/0/football/30318050> (accessed on 21/04/15).

¹¹ I use pseudonyms throughout.

ing tickets. We watched the game from the East stand. The match was dynamic to watch and we were sat mostly with families – a very small number of BBB had entered and were standing in the North stand, although many were protesting against the club director, Zdravko Mamić, who symbolised ‘crony capitalism’, corruption and the lack of democratic governance surrounding many football clubs in Croatia (see Hodges and Stubbs 2016)

Looking over to the South Stand on our left, the Celtic fans were packed in tightly and the atmosphere looked electric. During the game, at one point an incident took place in the South Stand. A Celtic fan was attacked with a baton by police creating a small fracas. Some fans later said this was because the fan had tried to light a flare, whilst others blamed it on a Mamić banner which had been put up. Members of BBB often printed t-shirts and flags with a picture of his face inside a red circle with a line through it. These are not permitted by security inside the stadium (*Maksimir*) where NK Dinamo play. This suggests that members of BBB were amongst the Celtic fans, or that they had connections with some Celtic fans there. At half time, the loudspeakers boomed out the song *Last Christmas I gave you my heart*, and this became an anthem which the Celtic fans sang during the second half of the game. After the match had ended, 4-3 to Dinamo, the Celtic fans were told to remain where they were for fifteen minutes as a ‘security precaution’, whilst we left the stadium and walked towards the tram station *Borongaj*. We stopped off at a *birtija* (bar) for a quick beer whilst waiting for the others. The barmaid smiled when she heard my foreign accent and when I referred to Ante as ‘druže’ (*comrade*), a form of address associated in Croatia with the socialist period and little used today, given that mainstream Croatian nationalist ideology has placed a particular focus on ‘purifying’ the language of certain ‘ideological’ words associated with the former Socialist period and words considered to be ‘Serbian’.

Ante’s phone rings. The others are a few seconds away, so we down our beers and leave the bar to find ourselves surrounded by a sea of green shifting forward towards the tram. Pushing inside before the automatic doors slam shut, we join in the friendly, lively mass who are singing, packed like sardines. Despite my wearing blue, a colour associated with Zagreb, I receive absolutely no negative comments from anybody on the tram: the atmosphere is uplifting and good-hearted. However, the atmosphere soon changes. Glancing out the window, a police van can be seen following us from station to station. A few stops later, the police have overtaken us and are waiting. The tram reaches the stop and the police board the tram at every entrance, first ordering everybody off. Nobody moves. Seconds later, a few fans move towards the police and start chanting ‘all cops are bastards’. The police move in and arrest several people, perhaps eight or ten, who are standing by the doors, ordering those individuals to leave the tram. The doors then shut and the atmosphere becomes relatively subdued compared to before, although the fans continue to chant. Moving forward several stops, the vast majority of fans exit, along with us in the main square, as police vans continue to follow the tram. We walk down *Ilica*, one of the main streets in Zagreb. The atmosphere is still lively with singing and chanting – a few fans are getting carried away at this point; one smashes the glass cover of a fire alarm on the outside of a city centre building and presses

the button. We carry on walking down the street and make our way to a city centre hostel where a large number of Celtic fans are staying. The downstairs of the hostel consists of a large bar area and there is a party atmosphere there as the space becomes packed with fans having a few drinks after the game. I relax and start chatting to some of them, excited to speak to people in English for a change. We order another round of beers and some *rakija* (fruit brandy) as more and more fans arrive. A fan from Lithuania asks my friends and I if we are ultras and I give him some of our group's stickers. I speak with a member of Green Brigade who campaigned for a Green Party Yes vote in the Scottish Independence Referendum. A few of us then discuss what happened with the police, condemning their approach. One friend, Marko, from WAZ – who had been in the away stand with the Celtic fans – argues that the police want an excuse to earn some extra cash, especially given the economic crisis, and so they play up the hooligan aspect of football matches. Events like this football match are perfect as they earn overtime. In order to justify their presence, they have to prove that their presence in those numbers is necessary and they can justify this through 'intervening' in a situation for which they are required to bring 'unruly' fan behaviours under control. Arrests provide easy evidence of 'offenders' and the jovial atmosphere after or before the game, with its mix of banter, drinking, and group chanting makes for an easy target. They make some arrests, the media report on a 'hooligan' disturbance and the police are happy. Marko then takes the argument a step further and argues that a small number of members of BBB are in symbiosis with the police, with some old members of BBB joining the police. Members of BBB travel as a group, often good natured, but one or two members take things a little too far, particularly when deliberately provoked by the police. The police come down heavy, make arrests, justify their presence and overtime whereas BBB in this way maintain a reputation with other ultras groups, primarily within the Croatian ultras scene. The party continues until around midnight when the hostel had to quieten down for the neighbours and so the group dispersed, some members of Green Brigade going to a city centre club, whilst we, not willing to pay the entrance fee, go to an alternative pub a few hundred metres away.

Encounters with (Fan) Cosmologies

As the above account concerns an experience of a match and an encounter with other groups, rather than fan discourse on their own group/an ethnography following their own organising and meetings, the two 'cosmological dimensions' concern relationships with other groups; interpretations made with respect to 'ordering stories', how individuals categorise themselves and others, and how sharp asserted boundaries are. On a more general level, national cosmology features in associating a particular fan habitus with prescribed citizenship, and also when I used discourses, such as the comment 'druže', which were distanced from the accepted boundaries of conversation. Other WAZ members' criticism of Ante's promotion of and identification with Ireland and the Irish struggle also delimits ideological boundaries in the group. Fan cosmology features in the different kinds of interpretations made by fans which sought to order the events and experiences of the evening. The lack of importance of not wearing Celtic colours in the tram, and my intuitive expe-

rience of that as slightly strange, indicates the presence of ordering strategies and expectations on my part, as a fan-researcher. Finally, the police's actions, in which they exercised not physical violence, but the assertion of authority through the implicit threat of the 'legitimate' use of force, transformed this event into a talking point of the evening. For instance, Marko aligned the police and their actions as working 'in symbiosis' with the BBB. In so doing, two 'Others' which he identified as similar, were mapped on to one another. He also homogenised the BBB in referring to 'some members' rather than, for instance, splitting them into factions. From an anthropological perspective, whether or not his interpretation is 'true' is of little importance, what matters is the strategies through which he describes and orders the world.

The *ultras tifo* Forum: Ordering Stories and Strategies

After the above match, the initiative *Celtic Fans Against Fascism* placed a message on Facebook criticising both the appearance of the Mamić banner and the concept of generalised 'fan solidarity', also mentioning how such banners also appeared from time to time at Celtic's stadium, Celtic Park:

"Whatever the story is with this banner, which was on display in the Celtic end at Zagreb last night, it will be interpreted as a show of solidarity and a morale booster for the anti-Mamić faction of the Bad Blue Boys (BBB). Whichever 'side' you support in that dispute you are showing solidarity with right-wing nationalists and fascists.

Those who think that this is just 'fan solidarity' and that it's simply about opposing club bosses regardless of politics might want to explain, why this club in particular, where did it start and why does stuff like this continue to pop-up periodically among Celtic supporters?

If it was Lazio, Atletico or Real Madrid (or any other club in Europe with a predominantly right-wing support) would it be appropriate to show solidarity with them when they are in dispute with the club bosses? No, of course it wouldn't, so why Dinamo Zagreb?" (*my emphasis*)

Such appearances over the past few years had led to extensive discussions taking place on fan forums, including the website *ultras tifo*, which as mentioned, was regularly followed by some members of WAZ. In this section I discuss various fans' positioning with respect to such occurrences. The accusation made in the above statement, is that assertions of generalised fan solidarity are a smokescreen for other solidarities asserted, which related to the political context discussed in the earlier section. Such solidarities are viewed as inappropriate by more highly politicised fans, particularly given attacks made by members of BBB on other clubs with which political solidarities are asserted by some Celtic fans, such as St. Pauli (see McDougall 2013):

The BBB should be hunted out of Celtic Park the next time they show their faces, don't be fooled by the Papal flags and friendly talk about

the Irish struggle, this is fascist scum that no republican or socialist worth their salt should touch with a barge pole.

NO FRIENDSHIPS WITH FASCISTS! KEEP THE BBB OUT OF PARADISE!¹²

This ‘all-or-nothing’ approach to BBB and Celtic fan friendship has resulted in recent years in long discussions on the *ultrastifo* and other forums, where some fans maintained a militant anti-fascist stance on the basis of BBB’s sporadic association with right wing politics in public space, whilst other fans argued for diversity of perspective within the BBB, arguing that banning them was not fair:

First of all, most BBB don't give a shit about Celtic. It is not an official friendship, just some individuals who like them because of the Catholicism and all. Second of all, those BBB who like Celtic are not right wingers at all. I know those people. Third of all it is a joke to read this *spoiled westerners crap* about politics, because they have never experienced nothing really bad coming out of that politics. If they lived in an eastern European country during communism for one day, they would never be such ardent left wingers. The same as *those pussies from St. Pauli*.

In 25 years of BBB we fought against a communist regime, we fought in a real war against Serbia and a communist dominated Yugoslav Army, we then had a struggle against a nationalist president Tudjman who changed the name of Dinamo to Croatia, and so on... So don't give us any politics crap, we are a group that stood strong under all political pressures, left and right, and you are, I repeat, just spoiled *western pussies* who play politics.

Also, BBB are not extreme right wingers, maybe 5% of our people are. The rest are just Croatian nationalists and even left wingers. And the guy who speaks in front of BBB for 15 years is a Jew. That's how much right wing we are. Regardless of this crap, Celtic fans are always welcome to Zagreb and *I hope this was written by some 15 year old kid. (my emphasis)*

This forum participant, claiming to be involved in BBB, pursues several strategies. First, the tone gives the impression of articulating a specifically male, fan voice (*navijački glas*), which later (left-wing) forum participants deride as ‘big boy’ comments. (S)he then delineates firm boundaries between Eastern and Western perspectives on the basis of direct experience of struggle and war, and varying living standards with the comment ‘spoilt Westerner’s crap’. Second, the militant anti-fascist voices emerging from TAL and other organisations such as St Pauli are feminised (‘pussies’) and infantilised. Other forum participants pursued similar strategies:

¹² <http://z6.invisionfree.com/UltrasTifosi/index.php?s=84e1af1727e7752b2de19107b2c97d6f&shoowtopic=16869&st=0> (accessed on 06/01/16)

As the years have passed I have seen quite a bit of changes at Celtic Park. The stands being one thing, and *little idiots* running about who think they are anti-fa communists.

To those who might not know, I think its a big shame who ever thought of this anti-bbb banner simply because of the fact that a whole ton of Irish as well as Scots went to help our catholic brothers during the war against serbia. I left the french foreign legion myself to go and help out. Since then I have kept friends in Zagreb as well as in Dubrovnik.

I do not think that it is appropriate at all for *little kids growing up in the west* to be preaching anything to do with communism or anti-fascism. As one bloke on here said, those people are in need of a history book, and rightly so. (*my emphasis*)

Like the previous fan, the above comments infantilise those involved in left-wing/anti-fascist activism. Here however, solidarities based on national/religious traditions are discussed, as well as solidarities relating to direct experience of the 'homeland' war (*domovinski rat*). Other forum participants, including those with an academic background and interest in football fandom, did not assert solidarities on the basis of tradition, instead arguing for a moderate approach and the existence of diversity of perspective within the BBB:

I've supported Arsenal for 16 years and Dinamo Zagreb for three and a half, I did my MSc in Glasgow and took an interest in Celtic, I wrote my MSc dissertation on the politics of east European football fans, and I'm a socialist. A very mixed bag!

Firstly, this statement - "The Bad Blue Boys are a bunch of fascist, right-wing, ultra-nationalist and ultra-Catholic bigots" - refers to a *tiny, extreme minority* within the BBB. When I first saw them play in September 2007, two people - and I literally mean two people - tried to start a Nazi chant. Nobody joined in, so they stopped. The first Dinamo season ticket holder I met used to vote for the Social Democratic Party, except that one time he got sick of their corruption and wrote "love" on the ballot paper. Hardly SS material.

I'm not denying that some of their fans are right wing, and I'm also not denying that they would attack St Pauli because they're a left wing team. I was in Warsaw in the summer, researching for my dissertation, and a Legia supporter complained to me about having to work with St. Pauli within Football Supporters' Europe, because they are "communists". I said "No they're not, they're anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-fascist", and she replied "Yes, but they say we're fascists!" *This kind of exaggerated labelling is partly what motivated me to write my paper.* I didn't like being told I supported a team whose supporters were "all Nazis" or "big fascists", when I knew that there are supporters of all political leanings within the BBB, and little support for actual fascists... (*my emphasis*)

Such exaggerated labelling, which the above forum participant criticises, relates to a sectarian categorisation of social reality in terms of exaggerated ‘good’ (antifascist) and ‘bad’ (fascist) moral categories. In my activist engagements as a member of Zagreb Young Antifascists’, I came across similar assertions from some of the membership deriding BBB both as mainstream (nationalist) and fascist – particular arguments arose when one member of the antifascist group graffitied some words over a BBB mural, given an implicit understanding that murals would be left alone. One forum participant also commented on such tendencies:

I'm left wing, and in UK society I agree with no platform for fascists, but the trouble with football at the moment is that everyone is labelling each other "communist" and "fascist", when the reality is either more moderate politics, or a small communist or fascist hardcore and the majority not caring about politics. Football groups have turned "no platform for our political enemies" into "no platform for either our political enemies or those who tolerate their presence". A UK political comparison would be refusing to dialogue with a liberal who believed the BNP/EDL should have free speech, rather than simply avoiding the BNP/EDL.¹³

Such questions and blanket categorising of others relate to what I call ‘fan(-activist) cosmologies’, in creating an oppositional reality of clearly defined ‘good’ and ‘evil’ forces. As numerous anthropological (e.g. Evans-Pritchard and Gillies 1976; Douglas 2003) studies have argued, categorising others is a process which both produces a degree of order and consistency, and enables individuals to generate self-understandings of their own positioning, and indeed, a kind of order often exists where apparent disorder – as in a football crowd – reigns (Marsh, Rosser, and Harré 2005). This is evidenced in Marko’s discussion of relations between the police and BBB in the above ethnographic account, where he focuses on perceived connections between some members of BBB and the police in order to position two ‘disliked Others’ alongside one another, particularly as members of BBB made use of tags such as ACAB (All Cops Are Bastards), which Marko viewed as properly anarchist.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has had two aims. The first has been to elaborate and examine the concept of ‘fan cosmology’, relating it to two anthropological definitions of cosmology, before setting out a set of research questions on this topic. Second, through analysing ethnographic and forum material, the paper has aimed to examine the interplay of various cosmologies in understanding solidarities asserted and the relationship between certain members of GNK Dinamo’s Bad Blue Boys and Celtic’s Green Brigade. Here, different kinds of fan solidarity cut across broader left/right political affinities, creating a situation which many highly politicised fan-

¹³ The BNP stands for the British National Party and the EDL for the English Defence League, both right wing organisations.

activists find to be unacceptable. Following such discussions both ethnographically and through fan forums is revealing in that it highlights distinctions between activist-fans and non-activist fans, but also different commitments by various academics when writing about football fan practices and subcultures in the social science literature. We might also consider precisely ‘where’ the concept of fan cosmology gets us. First, I suggest that the concept has particular appeal to researchers interested in religion, spirituality and/or questions of hierarchy and how particular social orders come to be accepted and legitimated. Second, the concept’s focus on order is particularly useful in better comprehending sectarian dynamics, which I understand as referring to situations in which what are often small differences come to be aligned with and represent oppositional collectivities, which historically have frequently formed the basis for violent conflicts. It is also useful for better understanding certain friendships amongst football fans supporting teams in geographically unrelated areas. Such friendships could be analysed as part of further research on this topic, e.g. comparing BBB members’ relationships with Rapid Vienna (*Ultra Rapid*) and Panathinaikos A.O (*Gate 13*) fan groups, with more formalised relationships on the Serbian fan scene, such as between FK Partizan (*Grobari*) and PAOK F.C. fans (*Gate 4*).

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