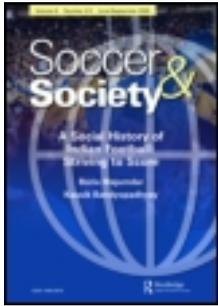


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### 'The birthplace of Italian communism': political identity and action amongst livorno fans

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## **‘The birthplace of Italian communism’: political identity and action amongst Livorno fans**

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Italian football has been heavily politicized since its arrival on the peninsular and the fans reflect this. Since the 1980s, there has been a shift to the right on the *curve* of Italian stadiums. Livorno stands apart as one of the few Italian clubs to maintain a resolute Communist identity. As a consequence of globalization, local identity has been reinforced and Livorno fans draw on a unique history to reinforce their identity. In a variety of different ways Livorno fans perform this identity and this frames their interactions with others. In so doing, they draw on a variety of Communist images and this helps define their actions. Through political protest, charity and matchday choreographies, Livorno fans reflect and resist specific aspects of football in a globalized world.

At Livorno, the destiny of the working people of Italy will be under discussion. At Livorno, a new era in the history of the Italian nation will begin.<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction**

As the ball struck the back of the net, the partisan crowd standing behind the goal erupted into exuberant celebration. The author of the goal charged towards the fans thrusting aloft his left hand in a triumphant clenched fist gesture. This was not a mere expression of jubilation, but was symbolically significant. The goal scorer was Cristiano Lucarelli, who was charging towards the fans of Livorno stood on the *Curva Nord* of the Stadio Armando Picchi. Lucarelli had grown up in the city of Livorno and famously took a pay cut in order to play for his hometown club. Addressing the commercialism in football he stated that ‘Some players buy themselves a Ferrari or yacht with a billion lire, I just bought myself a Livorno shirt’. Yet this decision was not a magnanimous gesture to endear him to the fans. It was the conscious decision of someone who understood the Livorno psyche. Lucarelli reflected the broader Livornese culture of the fans on the terrace. His clenched fist salute was evocative of the symbol of defiance of Communist resistance and mirrored the banners and songs of the fans. Flags of Che Guevara, Cuba and the Soviet Union sit alongside banners expressing solidarity with workers around the world. Lucarelli is part of the wider Livornese identity that celebrates Communism and this frames their actions and interactions within football.

How can we account for the continuance of left-wing identity and activism in a globalized twenty-first century? In a dynamic and mutable world, individuals and

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groups seek interpretive frameworks to provide stability and identity. Locality provides one form of identity that helps shape groups and individuals within it. Physical spaces provide symbolic memories for local participants and these are tied into local myths and narratives. Despite being the global sport, football also provides the space for the articulation of these local narratives as they are incorporated into the wider identity of specific fan-groups. Livorno is an apposite case. It provides a strong sense of local identity that is bound within broader national and global factors. Livorno's distinct local history ties in with the broader ideology of Communism and permits its incorporation into their local identity. In order to explain Livorno and the identity of fans, it is important to situate Livorno and their fans within the broader national and global context. The local Communist identity of their fans has its roots within the unique history of the city and this frames their wider political engagement. In order to present the importance of left wing politics to a section of the fans of Livorno, it is important to present a history of the city and its relation to the wider national context. Drawn from participant observation on the *curva*, specific examples will illustrate how this history and identity frames their interactions and actions around football and the broader social world.

### **'Of Many Peoples One': the history of Livorno**

Founding myths are vital in the creation of national identity. History plays an equally important role in the construction of local identity, especially in Livorno. Until unification, the Italian peninsular was a patchwork of city-states including Milan, Naples, Venice and Rome. Florence was the principle power in central Italy and since 1406 had used the city of Pisa as its port onto the Mediterranean. The slow moving River Arno connected Pisa and Florence, but access to the sea proved difficult in the fifteenth century as the port began to silt-up. This led to the ruling Medici family of Florence instigating the construction of a new port at Livorno, twenty miles to the south of Pisa. To populate this new city the Medici passed a range of laws called the *Leggi Livornine* which called for merchants of any nation, including 'Jews, Turks, Moors, Armenians, Persians and others' to populate the city. Other citizens were welcomed to the port, regardless of ethnic or religious background and without consideration of previous criminal activity. The result was that Livorno became a cosmopolitan city populated with a variety of merchants, religions, freed slaves and criminals. This image was used to sell the city, as gold coins minted in 1656 depict the city of Livorno with the motto 'of many peoples one'.<sup>2</sup> The remnants of this religious inclusion are still visible within the city. The Anglican, Dutch-German, Greek Orthodox and Armenian churches remain in prominent locations. Meanwhile, the synagogue, which was destroyed during bombardment in the Second World War, has been rebuilt to symbolize the size and importance of the Livornese Jewish community.

Industrialization and the unification of Italy saw Livorno continue to carve an independent niche. The workers of the city, and the stevedores and shipbuilders in particular, were particularly politically active. Unification resulted in the loss of the city's free port status, which led to several merchants and businesses relocating, as well as growing political activism. Industrialization in the nineteenth century created a large industrial class, with many belonging to anarchist and socialist political groups.<sup>3</sup> The social and political tensions of the 1920s saw a growing number of

strikes and riots across Italy, and Livorno was no exception. These tensions helped facilitate the growth of Communism and Fascism on the peninsular. Within Livorno, there was growing unease at the moderation of the Socialists, but with staunch resistance to Fascism. Livorno's place in history was cemented in 1921 when the Italian Communist Party was formed in the city. Leading figures in the Socialist party, including Antonio Gramsci, led a split at the socialist party conference held at the San Marco theatre in Livorno. These Communist links were reinforced in 1975 when the Italian Communist Party and their Spanish counterparts met in Livorno to forge Eurocommunism.<sup>4</sup> These political traditions remain strong in the city despite the collapse of Eurocommunism, and at local and national elections, the city regularly returns delegates from centre-left and extreme-left parties.

### Political identity in Italian football

Fan-groups are not homogenous. There are many different groups and individuals who watch football for different reasons and valorize different players and the styles of play.<sup>5</sup> We have to be careful when discussing overarching identities when analysing the influence of politics on fan-groups. Within Italian football culture, there are a variety of formal and informal groups who follow their team. Amongst the formal groups in Livorno, there are a variety of supporters clubs based in various locales around the city. Often based in bars, these clubs provide a variety of functions for their members. Primarily they operate as a social space for members to discuss politics, football and everyday life. In addition the clubs have certain concessions from the football club and can sell match tickets, official merchandize and organize coaches for travelling to away fixtures. Often these clubs reflect their specific locale and draw their members from the immediate environs of the club. Others target a specific group, such as the female supporters clubs who cater primarily for female fans. Alternatively, there are groups that have politics as a central element of their group identity.

A significant section of Italian football support comprises of the ultras. These fans are a major characteristic of the Italian football experience and have attracted much journalistic and academic attention and comprise the focus of this article. Ultras are predominantly young masculine fans who demonstrate an unwavering support for their team. The ultras groups grew out of supporters clubs and informal groups in the 1960s. These groups are products of their locale. For example, Roma fans traditionally came from the working class city centre of Rome, in contrast to the suburb dwelling Lazio fans.<sup>6</sup> These groups staunchly defend the image and symbolic space of their city. Primarily, this occurs through powerful spectacles although violence has also become a feature of various ultras groups. These choreographed spectacles include fireworks, flags, banners and orchestrated chanting. The head of the ultras faces the crowd and leads the chanting to help create a wall of noise and colour. These ritualistic performances build the atmosphere and help delineate members from other fans.

The Ultras are also a product of a particularly fertile period of Italian political history. Post-war Italy was effectively a one-party state as the ruling Christian Democrats maintained their hegemonic position through patronage and corruption. Political stagnation combined with economic stagnation during the 'years of lead' of the 1970s and early 1980s when Italy experienced profound political tensions.

Terrorist bombs in places like Milan and Bologna implicated neo-fascist groups, police and secret services. Meanwhile, the left-wing *Brigate Rosse* undertook a variety of terrorist acts, culminating in the kidnapping and assassination of the former Prime Minister, Aldo Moro. The *ultra* reflected this politically turbulent period. The names of the groups reflected both the team and the militant composition of the groups. The *Brigate Rossonere* of AC Milan, or Bologna's *Commandos Rossoblù*, highlight how ultras groups modelled themselves on militant political groups. By using monikers like 'Brigades' and 'Commandos', ultras groups mirrored the growing politicization of Italian society. The groups also overtly displayed political flags and banners reinforcing their political credentials.

Globalization impacted Italian society in the 1980s. Italian society underwent a consumption boom which resulted in a growing movement of people and fragmentation of traditional residential areas. New forms of migration took place as Italians moved to find work and migrant workers from Eastern Europe and Africa arrived.<sup>7</sup> The transformation of consumption and migration, alongside a transforming media environment, challenged many traditional notions. These transformations were reflected in football. There was a rise in racist chants and banners displayed in the stadiums and new symbolic players became valorized or desecrated.<sup>8</sup> Many ultras groups became apolitical or shifted to the right, while ultras groups of teams with a tradition of far-right support, like Lazio and Verona, intensified their political identity. In addition, many of the younger fans drew on the hooligan support prevalent in England and focused primarily on violence. Once again, the names reflected this shift. Monikers like the *Sconvolts* (Upsetters) or *Kaos*, became more prevalent.<sup>9</sup> Violence and racism became a significant marker of ultras identity.

The fragmentation of the ultras identity throughout the 1980s replicates a similar fragmentation of political identities elsewhere in Italian society. A growing focus on consumption and a transition from work-orientated forms of association saw the growth of new social movements.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to earlier forms of social movements, they were not focused purely on rights of citizenship. These new social movements incorporate and reconstruct new symbols of belonging in an attempt to bring about social change.<sup>11</sup> Some of these new forms of political identity emerged after the corrupt Christian Democrat hegemony disintegrated in 1992. The *tangentopoli* scandal saw the emergence of new populist parties like Forza Italia and Lega Nord. Testa identifies the ultras as being a part of this political transformation.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the ultras are one of many new social movements that have emerged in Italy in order to challenge the diverse aspects of local, national and global events. It is within this context that we must situate the left-wing ultras of Livorno.

### **'Typical Livornese': history and place in the construction of identity**

The Livornese have a strong affinity to their home city, and this is typical across Italy. The Italian term for this affinity is *campanilismo*.<sup>13</sup> Literally, this means the love of one's bell-tower or *campanile* and manifests itself in the love of one's home area. As Sanga states,

The *campanile* identifies the community of membership, in how its visibility delimits the community territory, that is the space becomes "ours", of the well known, of the obvious, of the everyday; the *campanile* is a symbol of a "*appaesamento*"<sup>14</sup> that is not only physical, but is principally psychological'.<sup>15</sup>

The *campanile* is also social as it becomes a physical representation of the community and defines its borders. Just as the tradition of being born within the sound of the 'Bow Bells' in London makes one a Cockney, the visibility and audibility of the *campanile* delimits the community space. However, key buildings or monuments are not the only markers of history and identity. The inhabitants of the city also encapsulate memory and identity and represent 'typical Livornese'. The rituals around football permit the articulation of these markers of identity.<sup>16</sup> Teams and players act as symbolic markers of local identity in an increasingly globalized marketplace.

Cristiano Lucarelli symbolizes the 'typical Livornese'. Gregarious, amicable and openly political, Lucarelli reflects the young masculine fans on the terrace. Yet a distinctly local player-symbol like Lucarelli needs to be situated in relation to globalization. Increased global migration of players has seen local players become inflected with greater significance.<sup>17</sup> As players no longer originate from the local area, or even the nation, players who reflect the identity of players grow in significance. Lucarelli's hometown was significant, but so was his politics. He was part of the Livorno ultras group, *Brigate Autonome Livornesi* (BAL), and shared their political identity. Lucarelli was friends with leading members of the ultras and took the squad number of '99' to reflect the formation date of the ultras group. The emergence of Lucarelli coincided with the re-emergence of localized identity. As local players become inflected with greater significance due to global transformations, local identity was also amplified. The process of globalization has witnessed a growing movement of people, images and culture. As groups become confronted with a growing cultural melange, local identity becomes reified. History and tradition provide tangible handles with which to construct and reinforce identity, Livorno's strong and unique history ensures that local groups have strong historical traditions. And in the case of Livorno, a politicized local identity is asserted.

### **'Boia Deh!': the matchday performance**

The rituals surrounding football create other symbols of local identity. The paraphernalia surrounding ultras spectacles help generate the collective effervescence and emotional energy which reinforce symbols of solidarity. The banners and flags incorporated into the spectacles take on additional meaning to the participants. In the case of Livorno there are a large number of flags and symbols are incorporated into the matchday choreography. Flags adorned with 'Communist' symbols like the 'red star' or the 'hammer and sickle' are prominently displayed within the Curva Nord. The image of Che Guevara is also prominent amongst many left-wing fan groups, and Livorno is no exception. His image adorns many flags, banners, T-shirts and scarves. Indeed, in 1997 during an Italy under-twenty-one match held in Livorno, Cristiano Lucarelli scored a goal and then displayed a T-shirt with Che Guevara's image. It is notable that in the globalized world of football and politics, an Argentinean doctor who was made famous as a Cuban revolutionary has become a symbolic marker for fans of an Italian football club. Other international flags are incorporated as markers of left-wing identity. Central to these are the flags of Cuba (alongside Che Guevara), Palestine and Jamaica, as well as flags of the former Soviet Union.

The spectacle and emotional energy of the choreographies are not the only way Livorno fans perform their identity. They are active agents within their own identity. They need to understand the importance of the relevant components in the construction of the spectacle. Fans purchase and fabricate the various banners in order to perform their identity. One notable example relates to the production of a banner dedicated to Stalin's birthday.<sup>18</sup> These banners are usually made on large white rolls of cloth and produced at local bars or club headquarters. Flags are either bought outside the stadium or at the local market. They can also be made through adding various images together or stitching together different flags, such as creating a larger patchwork effect of Cuban, Soviet Union and Che Guevara images. Consequently, Livorno fans are participating in a form of 'performative consumption', which fuels the rituals and inflects the symbols with meaning.<sup>19</sup> The fans are actively designing and making the products that help reinforce their identity and in turn, are inflecting the symbols with greater significance.

The ritualistic performance also extends to dress. Many fans wear dedicated clothing to football matches. This can simply be a scarf or hat in the colours of the team. The commodified approach of contemporary football now sees many fans wearing replica shirts, and other items of official merchandise. This approach has not been widely adopted in Italy, but this has not stopped fans wearing specific clothing to matches. As with the choreographies, fans select the appropriate symbols which reinforce their identity. Rather than official merchandise, many wear clothing branded with the club logo and the badge of their supporters club or ultra group. Others wear T-shirts sporting the same symbols that are depicted elsewhere in the choreography. Some will have images of Che Guevara, the Hammer and Sickle, or the Red Star. These work in parallel with the scarves and flags that depict the same symbols. Other T-shirts will have phrases, such as '*Boia Deh!*', a common phrase in the Livornese vernacular which helps reinforce the local significance of the dress.

The local dimension is reinforced through a distinctly military style of dress. After the Second World War, the Americans who had liberated the city from the Germans, left much of their equipment behind. A market was established which sold this equipment. The 'American Market' remains and continues to sell military-style clothing and equipment. Within this market there is also a stall that sells the T-shirts, flags and scarves that are worn at the stadium. The military aspect also reflects the political birth of the ultra. During the 'years of lead' of the 1970s, ultras were heavily politicized. Specific items of clothing symbolized the political leanings of the groups. Fans with far-right identities incorporated the black dress of the Fascists into their image. They wore black shirts or black bomber jackets and the fans of Lazio and Verona still wear similar items of clothing. In contrast, members of left-wing groups adopted the guerrilla style of clothing made famous by various global revolutionaries. Green military-style jackets are worn to games at Livorno and this helps reinforce the militancy of the ultras. In addition, many fans wear the green army-style caps that were sported by Chairman Mao and Fidel Castro. Not only do these items of clothing hark back to a left-wing tradition, but they also become incorporated into the identity of the fans. They become a type of drag that helps reinforce the performance.

Choreographies are not just visual. Chants and songs are incorporated into the spectacle to create a total sensory experience. Many of these songs are repetitive

and valorize the virtues of the city of Livorno, the players and the fans. Their simple rhythmic structures are inclusive and enable many fans to join in. Often these songs are accompanied with rhythmic clapping or jumping up and down. At Livorno, Partisan songs are sung which reaffirm the Communist identity of the fans. The Communist anthem, *Bandiera Rossa* (the Red Flag), is frequently sung throughout matches. Likewise, *Bella Ciao* is also sung at every home game. This song was a popular Partisan song during the Second World War and describes the story of a partisan who was willing to fight and die defending the liberty of Italy from Fascists. Both songs are sung at the beginning of matches and act as a marker for local identity from the beginning. These songs are also sung intermittently throughout the match to reinforce the political dimension of the fans' local identity. The number and intensity of the songs reflects the opposition. *Bandiera Rossa* and *Bella Ciao* will be sung more often and with greater volume and participation against rivals like Verona or Lazio. This reflects their rivals' Fascist sympathies and highlights how Livornese identity is strengthened in opposition to specific rivals.

In addition to sharpening Livornese identity, rivals are also symbols to be desecrated. Rival symbolic players are desecrated in order to minimize their influence, or challenge rival supporters.<sup>20</sup> Alternatively, rival fans are de-humanized. The political dimension of Italian football is incorporated into this ritual. Livorno fans will chant 'Fascists of shit' at Lazio and Verona fans. In parallel, these fans will retort 'Reds of shit' at the Livorno fans. Through this ritualistic performance, the collective identities of both groups are reinforced. Both sides are reaffirming their own identity while simultaneously reaffirming that of their rivals.

In the days of BAL, there was greater organization of the matchday choreographies. Alongside the regular banners and flags depicting Che Guevara and Red Stars, the directors of BAL organized choreographies that embraced the entire *Curva Nord*. Upon winning promotion back to Serie A in 2004, after a fifty-five year hiatus, BAL staged a famous choreography where all of the *Curva Nord* held aloft red cards. At the centre of the choreography was a large image that extended from the front of the *curva* to the back. On this banner there was the image of the sun, shining brightly, with the hammer and sickle taking a prominent position within the sun. Underneath the *curva* there was a long banner stating 'A long night is disappearing ... at the horizon, our sun is rising'. At face value, this banner referred to the 'long night' where the club had not played top flight football for over half a century. The sun represented a new day and a new horizon for the football club and the fans. But the image was infused with Communist symbolism. Alongside the obvious image of the hammer and sickle, the choice of the rising sun was significant. This is a common image within Communism referring to the bright future awaiting workers when Communism arrives. Significantly, the organizers used this phrase and added an additional 'our' to the phrase. On the banner, 'our' was coloured red to reinforce the fact that Livornese identity, 'our' identity, was red. In a nation where cities are still referred to as 'red' or 'black' based on their political leanings, this is significant. Both banners worked in unison to present a clear image of left wing identity by drawing on various Communist symbols. In doing so, they reinforced a distinctly Livornese identity.<sup>21</sup>



Other choreographies have drawn heavily on left-wing symbolism. One choreography filled the *Curva Nord* with red cards; the deep red representing the colours of the city and the club. Within this wall of colour were situated strategically placed yellow cards that depicted the letters BRIG in Cyrillic script. The BRIG was short for Brigade Autonome Livornesi and reinforced the link to Communism. The use of Cyrillic symbolized Russia and its place in putting Communism on the world map. Central to this choreography was a hammer and sickle. Once again the Communist aspect of the fans' identity was clearly embedded with the colours of the team and the city, and strategically placed as a central aspect of their performance. The link to Communist Russia was reinforced in other choreographies. On Stalin's birthday, ultras displayed a banner commemorating his birthday.<sup>22</sup> The fans were making the symbolic link between Russia and Communism in order to reinforce their own local identity.

Since BAL disbanded, there are still choreographies on the *Curva Nord*. Although these are not as extensive, they still display left-wing symbols. Che Guevara and other symbols are still displayed prominently on the *curva*. Various banners are also displayed which reinforce this aspect of their identity. In 2003 fans held up a banner to celebrate Stalin's birthday. A similar banner was displayed in August 2006 to commemorate Fidel Castro's eightieth birthday. Other banners draw on these left-wing traditions and highlight the plight of workers around the world. In particular, when Livorno played AC Milan in 2010, fans displayed a banner demonstrating solidarity with the workers of a local gas refinery whose jobs were under threat. The fact that a match against AC Milan was chosen is significant.

### **'Berlusconi paedophile' – a new dynamic to left-wing identity**

While the fans and ultra of Livorno retain a strong left-wing identity, it has refocused in response to the changing dynamics of Italian politics. While the fans of

Livorno still retain traditional political rivalries with fans of clubs with a Fascist tradition, such as Verona and Lazio, they have also developed a rivalry with AC Milan. King has highlighted that there is a new rivalry towards the elite clubs based on their hegemonic positions in European football.<sup>23</sup> While this may be true for some fans, within Livorno there is another dynamic affecting this rivalry. The owner of AC Milan is Silvio Berlusconi, a business magnate who owns a range of businesses and is also the owner of Italy's largest private media corporation, Mediaset. Berlusconi used his ownership of AC Milan and media access to 'enter the field' of politics after a major corruption scandal affected Italian Politics.<sup>24</sup> Berlusconi has dominated Italian politics for nearly twenty years. In doing so, he has moved the centre-right from being dominated by Catholicism to a populist, media-orientated spectacle. This wider transformation in Italian politics has also resulted in a shift of focus from Livorno Fans.<sup>25</sup>

Berlusconi represents a powerful symbol through which to articulate a left-wing identity. His domination of media and business has coincided with a wider populism in Italian Politics. Berlusconi is an example of what Sklair would call the 'transnational capitalist class'.<sup>26</sup> These individuals have made significant personal gains as a result of deregulation of the global economy. Within Italy, Berlusconi actively challenged and subsequently benefited from deregulation of state television and now owns three of Italy's four private stations. Deregulation of football ownership permitted Berlusconi to take control of AC Milan and the changing dynamic of global media facilitated the exposure and subsequent collapse of the existing Italian political class. Consequently, Berlusconi symbolizes globalization and the new right in Italy.

For a club from a city with a strong anti-Fascist tradition, Berlusconi becomes a clear symbol to be profaned. Games with AC Milan now become infused with greater meaning as the fans seek to desecrate the symbol of Berlusconi. A famous example occurred in 2004 when Livorno returned to Serie A. Their first game was against AC Milan at the San Siro Stadium. Ten thousand Livorno fans made the trip to witness the club's return to the elite league. Significantly, Berlusconi had been photographed entertaining Tony and Cherie Blair at his Sardinian villa. During this trip, he was wearing a white bandana covering a hair transplant. In honour of this exposure, many Livorno fans sported similar white bandanas adorned with the phrase, 'Silvio, we are coming'.

Berlusconi was the centre of media attention again throughout 2010. He had been implicated in a series of sex scandals, which led to his wife filing for divorce after he attended the eighteenth birthday party of Noemi Letizia who called him 'Papi' (Daddy). Further scandals emerged where it was alleged that Berlusconi entertained political leaders with large numbers of young women at his Sardinian villa. It was also alleged that Patrizia D'Adario had been paid to attend parties given in honour of Berlusconi, in return for the Prime Minister giving favourable conditions to a businessman. And finally, it was alleged that Berlusconi had slept with a young escort called Ruby 'The Heart Stealer'. The Prime Minister was also alleged to have tried to influence the police not to instigate inquiries into Ruby as he believed she was related to the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak.

Livorno's stadium became a space where the Berlusconi scandals could be exposed. In September 2010, AC Milan visited the Stadio Armando Picchi and Berlusconi became the focus. Many fans wore their white bandanas in homage to their match in 2006. Others held aloft banners lamenting his actions (get all the

quotes from the thesis). Many simply stated ‘shame’, while others entered into word play by linking the scandals from Noemi Letizia to Patrizia D’Adario. One stated ‘Papi, your escort is double parked’. This linked ‘Papi’ to the double meaning of the word ‘escort’, which signifies the car manufactured by Ford as well as a high-class prostitute. The reference to double parked also had a double meaning as it refers to the practise of stopping a car in traffic alongside another, but also it refers to adultery. Other fans held aloft sexual images to reinforce the sexual nature of the allegations against Berlusconi; a sex doll was dressed in a Livorno shirt to reinforce this.

Songs and chants reinforced the spectacle. A regular chant of ‘Ber-lus-coni Piece-of-shit’ was frequently sung alongside other songs symbolizing Communism, such as ‘Bandiera Rossa’ and ‘Bella Ciao’. Alongside these ritual songs, fans also chanted ‘Silvio Pedofilo’ (Silvio paedophile) to suggest that he was engaging in sexual activity with underage girls. This not only sought to highlight and reinforce the sexualized nature of the allegations, but also sought to desecrate Berlusconi as a symbol. Few activities in Western culture attract more revulsion and anger than paedophilia. Smaller families have led to a greater parental focus on children and they have been elevated to sacred status. Consequently, sexual crimes desecrate these sacred objects and highlight the unequal power balance between children and adults. A powerful businessman and political leader engaging in these types of activities creates greater revulsion; a revulsion that Livorno fans sought to exploit.

Crucially, the focus on the political identity of Livorno fans against Berlusconi also permitted the articulation of broader political messages. Fans also held up banners highlighting the impact of political decisions made by Berlusconi on the city, which also reinforced solidarity with workers and reaffirmed as sense of left-wing identity. There were plans to close the ENI gas refinery and the Delphi factory in Livorno which would lead to considerable job losses. One banner specifically targeted the key sites of employment by saying ‘Close the Delphi, close the refinery. Close also the port and we’ll all go away’. *Local political identity was affirmed through a banner stating* ‘Now enough, respect for the workers’. The complex interconnected presentation of national and local political identity was demonstrated with a banner stating ‘Papi we’re getting pissed off here ... solidarity with the workers in the fight’. By linking Berlusconi’s sex scandals to local and national political struggle, national and local politics became entwined in the figure of the prime minister. More interestingly, the verb ‘to be pissed off’ (*incazzarsi*) was shortened on the banner to ‘inc’ so that it would be reported in the media without censorship. This ensured that the message was for a wider audience than those in the stadium.

### ‘The Red heart of Livorno’: identity and action

Across Europe many different fan groups have established new social movements seeking to challenge the transformation of football. Unlike Britain, there is no umbrella organization (like the Football Supporters’ Federation) which co-ordinates these movements. However, they are becoming symbolized in common slogans and approaches. A common banner displayed across Italy is ‘No to Modern Football’. Fans are seeking to challenge the commercial approach taken by clubs as they seek to adapt to a globalized football marketplace. Ultra groups also seek to challenge changes to the policing and control of football fans at matches. As has occurred across Europe,<sup>27</sup> football banning orders have been implemented in Italy. Called

Daspos, these sought to curtail the political and violent aspects of ultra groups. Daspos were a significant factor in the demise of BAL, Livorno's leading ultra group. After a policeman was killed during riots between Palermo and Catania fans in 2007, draconian regulations have been imposed which restrict the movement of fans around the stadium. These regulations dubbed the Pisanu law after the minister who implemented them, implemented a variety of controls over fans. Tickets have to be bought with identification to ensure that those fans with Daspos cannot enter. Barriers have been erected around the stadiums to perform checks against tickets and to prevent certain elements of the choreography (like fireworks and flag poles that are too long) from entering the stadium. The stadium has been militarized and this has helped to reinforce the identity of the ultras as the police become the common symbol of oppression.<sup>28</sup> Along with the 'No to Modern Football' slogan, police oppression is symbolized in slogans like 'Free Ultras' and 'All Cops Are Bastards'.

The perceived oppression felt by the ultras helps structure resistant action. The Pisanu Law also authorized the football Observatory to restrict attendance at games. The Observatory could stop all fans from attending games and enforce the game to be played behind closed doors, or prevent away fans from travelling. Prior to the local derby between Pisa and Livorno in February 2009, the Observatory decreed that Livorno fans would not be able to travel to the match. In response, a group of Livorno fans organized a March through the city centre to protest outside the town hall. The protest coincided with the busiest part of the evening, the evening stroll undertaken by all members of the public. The March incorporated the same elements as the matchday choreographies. Fans wore the same clothes as they would wear when attending the stadium. They carried flags of Che Guevara and the hammer and sickle and chanted the same left-wing songs, like *Bella Ciao* and *Bandiera Rossa*. Their identity also structured the route of their March. When the March reached a junction, the leader asked 'which direction?' and the response was 'to the left, always to the left'.

The ultras followed this protest with a similar approach on the day of the match. The train station and roads between Pisa and Livorno were blocked by police in order to prevent the fans from attending the match. The Livorno ultras extended their protest by accompanying the official team coach in their cars and scooters. They sounded their horn, displayed banners decrying the restrictions and chanted the same left-wing songs. Inadvertently the police and Observatory had given the ultras an opportunity to perform their identity to a wider audience and consequently, reinforce it.

Livorno's Communist identity also structures their wider actions. The construction of being left-wing is that one must express empathy with those less fortunate. Livorno's ultras seek to demonstrate solidarity with like-minded groups. The display of Palestinian flags reflects their support for groups perceived as being oppressed. Prior to a UEFA cup match with Maccabi Haifa in 2006, an open letter was sent to Livorno fans urging them to display as many Palestinian flags as possible as a symbolic gesture against this Israeli team. Similarly, solidarity is offered to the IRA and supporters of a unified Irish nation. Graffiti around the city expresses this solidarity, as well as various comments held within bars and internet forums. At local bars and political clubs, fans organize fundraising events to provide money for various causes, in particular political or environmental causes. These events include organizing football tournaments, charity auctions and

music events. The stadium also becomes a lucrative space for fundraising, as there are a large number of people in one location. In April 2009, an earthquake hit the southern Italian city of L'Aquila, killing over three hundred people and making nearly sixty-five thousand people homeless. At the following home match against Treviso, a collection was organized by ultras. Fans stood at the gates and talked to all fans entering the *Curva Nord* ensuring that they all put money into the buckets.

Similar scenes took place after the tragic earthquake in Haiti in January 2010. Once again a collection was organized for the victims. The fans also used the stadium as a stage to promote their identity and their solidarity with the victims. A large banner was affixed to the perimeter fencing surrounding the *Curva Nord*. The banner stated, 'The red heart of Livorno is with those who suffer and struggle. In Haiti as in L'Aquila, active solidarity is from below'. Not only did this banner take an international perspective to human suffering, it sought to illustrate the similar despair and destruction occurring to Haitians as well as Italians. The banner was careful in its choice of language and how this was presented. The banner was written in black, but with the words, 'red', 'suffer', 'struggle' and 'active solidarity is from below' were all written in red. The colour made a direct reference to the Communist identity of the fans, and by extension the city that shared the same name. The choice of the words suffer, struggle and solidarity are evocative of Communist dialogue and reinforces the message. They hark back to the notion of a class struggle, and this point is reinforced by the notion that solidarity comes from below, from the workers and the oppressed. Finally the fact that the fans refer to the 'red heart' of Livorno highlights how they see this identity as being a natural part of themselves and like the heart in a human body, it drives everything else. The heart also symbolizes emotion and love and that their love for their club, their city and its politics are intertwined. Being seen to be supporting the oppressed helps reinforce identity and co-ordinates interactions with others.<sup>29</sup>



**Antifa Livorno: Self and the Other**

The importance of the Livornese identity is how it structures their interactions. In a Goffmanian sense, our subjective understanding of events is organized and understood through a wider conceptual framework.<sup>30</sup> Local identity is reinforced in relation to other groups; *campanilismo* not only demarcates who is within the symbolic boundaries of the city, but who is outside. The anthropological principle of the 'Bedouin syndrome' is instructive.<sup>31</sup> Alliances and rivalries are developed between those who share your views and those who support rivals. These are negotiated through *gemellaggio* or 'twinning'.<sup>32</sup> Local historical traces are re-asserted. For example, friends of the traditional local rivals of Pisa are enemies of Livorno. Politics adds a further dimension to these associations. Rivalries are established with clubs who have contrasting political identities. Livorno has a longstanding rivalry with fans from Lazio and Verona and this sharpens their own identity. As a result games between these teams are inflected with greater significance which intensifies the emotional atmosphere before, during and after the game. This is amplified by police and media attention focusing on the match and the political aspects of the rivalry. When Livorno and Lazio faced each other in 2006, the satirical television show *Le Iene* broadcast a parallel interview with the symbolic players of both clubs. Both Cristiano Lucarelli and Paolo Di Canio were quizzed over their politics and love of their respective clubs.

Alliances are also formed with groups and teams who share a political ideology. The match between Livorno and Hellas Verona in December 2011 was notable for a group of fans representing a small amateur club called Virtus Verona. The club was formed in 2006 in order to create a left-wing alternative to the more famous Hellas Verona. Like Livorno, they utilize the left wing symbols of Che Guevara and red stars prominently in their flags and banners and incorporate various anti-fascist slogans and chants into their choreographies. When Livorno played Hellas, Virtus were due to play elsewhere in Tuscany, so they combined their trip with Livorno's match against Hellas. They joined the Livorno fans on the *Curva Nord* to show their solidarity with their political allies against the 'black jackets' of Hellas.

The match against Hellas Verona also illustrated the globalization of these solidarity networks. Alongside Virtus Verona fans, supporters of AEK Athens and Marseilles had also arrived to demonstrate their solidarity with Livorno against the fascist identity of Hellas. This illustrates that there is a pan-European anti-fascist network of fans who seek to present a unified resistance to the right. Fans of clubs with left-wing identities are joining together under a European antifa collective. In addition to the fans Livorno, AEK Athens and Marseilles, fans of the Istanbul side of Besiktas, Glasgow Celtic and St Pauli of Hamburg regularly attend each other's matches, especially when they are playing against clubs like Verona or Lazio. In addition, Livorno attracts fans from around the world who are attracted to the political dimension of the fans. The *Curva Nord* has a cosmopolitan atmosphere with fans from Sweden, Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and many more, regularly attending matches.

The football club has helped to reinforce these links. In September 2009 Livorno accepted an invitation to play the Turkish side Adana Demirspor. Adana has a history of being a club for workers, and their fans have built a strong left-wing identity. In a similar manner to the banners and flags adorning the *Curva Nord* in Livorno, the ultras of Adana decorated their stadium with banners and flags depicting Che Guevara, communist symbols and antifa slogans. They embraced their friendship with the ultras of Livorno with a large banner emblazoned with the

club crests and the words ‘the lads of Italy, welcome’ written in Italian. During the match, they staged a spectacular firework display that circumvented the stadium, while the fans chanted the partisan song of *Bella Ciao*. And once again, Cristiano Lucarelli was the centre of attention. Just as players can become symbolic, so do clubs. Within Italy, Livorno symbolizes a left-wing, Communist club. Rival fans seek to desecrate them, and their symbols. Yet other clubs also want to emulate them. They adopt the same symbols and seek to incorporate these symbols into their existing traditions.

Globalized technology helps to maintain and reinforce these networks. The internet in particular allows fans of these different clubs to communicate on a regular basis and exchange ideas. There are several forums, such as Celtic’s Green Brigades or Livorno’s *AlèLivorno*, which give a virtual space for the articulation of identity and exchange of ideas. Details of recent activities, *antifa* campaigns or various performances are posted and debated. In this sense, the forum operates as an online version of the stadium; a liminal space where ideas can be freely articulated. Social media also permits fans to remain in contact and share ideas. Facebook in particular has several pages dedicated to various football teams. Livorno has several fan pages and many of these are political in dimension, such as ‘*Antifa Livorno*’. Many of these are linked to the wider anti-fascist pages, like ‘*Antifa*’ or ‘*Antifascismo*’, that post details of anti-racist and anti-fascist campaigns and news that may interest followers. Social media sites like youtube also provide a space for fans to present themselves. The performance of the spectacle can be recorded on mobile devices and uploaded onto the internet. In this way, the performance of the spectacle becomes performative. It can be replayed and copied by any individual or any group who wish to reinforce a similar identity.

## Conclusion

Marxism and Communism are significant to the identity of many Livorno fans and ultras. It helps make them articulate their difference from other clubs in Italy. But this is no aberration. This is a product of their history and the wider national political and social context. The hegemonic position of the Christian Democrats in post-war Italy, coupled with political turmoil in the 1960s, led to a politicization of everyday life. The ultras subculture grew out of this social milieu. Local identity was reasserted through the impact of globalization and once again football became a way of articulating this. Livorno drew on its unique local history to situate itself in the political scene of the ultras.

Football is a space to articulate a specific localized identity and put this identity into practice. Livorno’s Marxist identity frames their understandings of themselves and their interactions with others. It determines their rivals and their allies as well as guiding their actions. Through this, Livorno fans have performed a variety of political protests which both raise awareness of specific issues, and reaffirm their identity. Through matchday choreographies, fans present their political affiliation. Banners are made which raise political issues. Berlusconi has become a specific symbol of the growth of the populist right in Italy. Livorno fans chanted and displayed banners attacking his sexual peccadilloes and political decisions. Fans have also raised humanitarian issues such as the plight of earthquake victims in L’Aquila and Haiti. The international outlook of the latter illustrates how Livorno’s local Communist identity is articulated globally. This is also undertaken through twinning

with clubs who share a similar political identity. Through these networks, fans share information on choreographies and political protests. Global networks fuse with local identity to maintain and reinforce specific social actions. In this way, actions perceived as Communist continue and are reproduced in Livorno.

## Notes

1. Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 121.
2. Fratrarrelli and Villani, 'People of Every Mixture'.
3. Abse, 'The Rise of Fascism in an Industrial City'.
4. *The Times*, 'Obituary: Enrico Berlinguer'.
5. Bromberger, 'Football as World-View and as Ritual'.
6. Dal Lago and De Biasi, 'Italian Football Fans: Culture and Organisation'.
7. Foot, *Modern Italy*.
8. Doidge, 'If You Jump up and Down, Balotelli Dies'.
9. Podaliri and Balestri, 'The Ultras, Racism and Football Culture in Italy'; Roversi, 'The Birth of the "Ultras"'; Stefanini, *Ultras*; Testa and Armstrong, *Football, Fascism and Fandom*'.
10. Melucci, *Nomads of the Present*; Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye*.
11. Scott, *Ideology and the New Social Movements*.
12. Testa and Armstrong, *Football, Fascism and Fandom*.
13. Waley, *The Italian City-Republics*.
14. Translator's note: *appaesamento* is a non-translatable word that suggests how the built human environment has been manipulated and demarcates human's territory.
15. Sanga, 'Campane E Campanili', 36.
16. Bromberger, 'Football as World-View and as Ritual'.
17. King, *The European Ritual*.
18. Foot, *Calcio*.
19. Hills, *Fan Cultures*.
20. Doidge, 'If You Jump up and Down, Balotelli Dies'.
21. <http://cultureofsoccer.com/2007/05/01/di-canio-vs-lucarelli-an-ideological-battle-seen-in-salutes/>.
22. Foot, *Calcio*.
23. King, *The European Ritual*.
24. Porro and Russo, 'Sport and Society in Italy Today'.
25. Doidge, 'Italian Football in an Era of Globalisation'.
26. Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class*.
27. Tsoukala, *Football Hooliganism in Europe*.
28. Doidge, 'Italian Football in an Era of Globalisation: Neo-Patrimony, New Localism and Decline'.
29. [http://m.sky.it/sport/calcio\\_italiano/2010/01/24/livorno\\_haiti\\_striscione](http://m.sky.it/sport/calcio_italiano/2010/01/24/livorno_haiti_striscione).
30. Goffman, *Frame Analysis*.
31. Dunning et al., 'Spectator Violence at Football Matches'.
32. Dal Lago, *Descrizione Di Una Battaglia*; Bruno, *Vita Da Ultras*; Dal Lago and De Biasi, "Italian Football Fans"; Marchi, *Il Derby Del Bambino Morto*; Stefanini, *Ultras*.

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