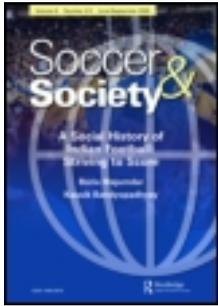


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The Politics and Culture of FC St. Pauli: from leftism, through anti-establishment, to commercialization

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The mass appeal of football often renders the popular game susceptible to all things societal. Transforming football stadia to political arenas is an old phenomenon, particularly, when clubs boasting a glorious past are involved. FC St. Pauli has certainly been instrumental to developments in its immediate environment though not so much for its success on the pitch, as for the socio-political views that its fans have been projecting ever since the mid-1980s. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to contextualize the same fan (and club) ideological background that has attracted worldwide attention in the light of the game's contemporary transformation.

Football identity

Football serves as a medium of social inclusion and exclusion. In our postmodern society, it is one of the few remaining, indeed strengthened, platforms of *communitization* in Max Weber's sense of a subjective sense of belonging. It allows for the identification with an obvious community within the wider setting of a largely artificial, constructed *Gesellschaft* (association) form of society. For many football enthusiasts, this community is very temporary, usually built around the common experience of a match. In this case, their identification has the character of a neo-tribe as defined by Michel Maffesoli,¹ that is, temporary and fluid communities that are built on common rituals and symbolism that, however, lack any existential functions. These tribes are still locally bound and require a certain intimacy of contact with other members.

While the latter is also true for football fans, especially for fan club members, this community becomes a focus of identification, in the case of 'ultras' even existentially penetrating their whole lives, becoming the provider of deeper meaning in a quasi-religious sense. These 'ultra' fans are often the ones who are opposed to the commercialization of a club, because they perceive it as compromising the deeper meaning that they attribute to their community. When the members of fan clubs are spread throughout the world (FC St. Pauli has fan clubs as far from their local base as Calcutta), one would rather speak of imagined communities, a term introduced into the study of nationhood by Benedict Anderson,² but very applicable as a more diffuse sense of belonging to the supporters of a particular football club. Similarly

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to changing one's nationality, one can also change the team one supports, often temporarily. This imagined community is typically built around internationally successful clubs like Real Madrid CF and Manchester United FC. Exclusion, on the other hand, is also practiced in the same context. 'While social class differences may – at least temporarily – be experienced as unimportant during a match, football can also provoke racism, nationalism and sexism ... [they can serve] to symbolically confirm superiority or to (re)establish social and cultural differences'.³ Yet social class can be embodied in the very space of the football ground: set apart by different areas on the stands, with the elite having separate boxes, exclusion can be very apparent indeed, and it has crept into the FC St. Pauli stadium, the Millerntor, with its recent expansion. The stadium can be the place of awareness and affective expression of contrast and differences which can be in line with class specific values. These are often transgressed, nevertheless, in its quality of being a relatively open reservoir of integration.

The competitive nature of the game of football dictates that rivalries are under no circumstances limited to the two opposing sides contending for victory on the field, given that the endeavours of the two opponents are more often than not reinforced by their fans – the very same fans – the sense of collective identity of which serves to separate *them* from the *other*. Identity is central to football culture and, therefore, to the kind of distinct communities that the game has helped construct. It goes without saying, of course, that manifesting the identity of as colourful an entity as a football club is the community it has come to represent, 'Whether representing urban or rural areas, neighborhoods or nations, social classes or ethnic groups, football clubs have long been considered as appropriate agents for maintaining, and even forming new, collective identities'.⁴ Separating 'us' from 'them' is instrumental in understanding football culture, irrespective of the definition available for the term *community*. Tony Blackshaw provides us with two such definitions, the first put forward by Talcott Parsons, whereas the second one is cited from Anthony Cohen's work. Evidently, both definitions may as well illustrate the essence of a group of football fans for Parsons defined community as 'that collectivity the members of which share a common territorial area as their base of operations for daily activities',⁵ while Anthony Cohen noted that

whether or not its structural boundaries remain intact, the reality of community lies in its members' perception of the vitality of its culture. People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity.⁶

Cohen's writings, in particular, are 'important for understanding historical and contemporary supporter community formations around football clubs. He points us towards understanding football clubs as symbols around which rituals of communal identity are acted out'.⁷ It is precisely within this context that clubs 'consciously created identities and introduced colours, flags and other symbols so that they stood for something within their local community'.⁸ Identity in football culture is fundamental, given that 'virtually all clubs are named emblematically after a particular "place" and thus have the kind of affective tie to a specific locality that one finds in more traditional and localist societies'.⁹

FC St. Pauli is a very special football club in that it seems to inspire all these different types of identification, both exclusion and inclusion, in spite of its

extremely moderate sportive success. Indeed, the deeper sense of *Gemeinschaft* (community) seems to be very strong in its local members, with the rare extension of this community into a more political identity. This is linked with exceptionally high levels of club-internal political involvement, as well as an unusual political activity level within the district and indeed wider society. The basis of this identity is the self-image of the underdog, the non-conformist, being anti-establishment and 'leftist'. FC St. Pauli is just the vehicle for this identity as generally 'Sports are vehicles and embodiments of meaning, whose status and interpretation is continually open to negotiation and conflict'.¹⁰ This identity also leads to pushing for less exclusionist policies and practices (such as the adoption – as the first football club in Germany – of explicitly anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-homophobic statutes). The exclusionary potential, on the other hand, is then directed against clubs that are perceived as 'right wing,' such as Hamburger Sport-Verein or FC Hansa Rostock. It is also directed at the club's management, when their decisions seem to oppose or threaten that identity.

Deviating from the more sociological approaches that help define community, the identity of any given football club may just as well be established by employing what is admittedly a rather peculiar methodological tool for investigating its origins. Heraldry has definitely served well the need of nobility and politically organized communities alike to distinguish themselves emphatically for it has the capacity to manifest key historical and cultural values of the arms' bearer, particularly, what is known as the coat of arms. Evidently, communities all across Europe made use of distinct armorial bearings, whether states, cities, or towns, to express their unique identity focusing, predominantly, upon their cultural heritage and the symbolic qualities that have come to epitomize in quite a meaningful fashion, always highlighting the sheer essence of the locality. The early football communities differed little and is, therefore, hardly surprising that

Among the pioneering generation of European football clubs that were founded in cities and towns, some realized the intrinsic qualities of the coat of arms of their locale and, taking advantage of their early formation, claimed it first to serve as an unswerving ambassador.¹¹

Although the origins of Hamburger Sport-Verein date back to 1887, it is the badge of FC St. Pauli (est. 1910) that features the coat of arms of Hamburg. Considering the uneasy relationship between the city of Hamburg and St. Pauli (see below), it is unorthodox that the club representing the latter has become the city's ambassador by claiming a significant part of its history. Depicting the Hammaburg Castle, from which the city derives its name, the coat of arms of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg – as is the official name – is dominated by a fort consisting of three towers. The tower in the middle features a cross on the top and is believed to represent a medieval church, since Hamburg was once an archbishopric. The stars above the outer towers denote to Virgin Mary, the patron saint of the city, while the closed gates of the castle symbolize the determination of its people. Only the red and white colours of the coat of arms of Hamburg – also the colours of the Hanseatic League – escaped the attention of FC St. Pauli. Instead, it is Hamburger Sport-Verein, their local rivals, which play in red and white.

A club's origins are always significant and, in the case of German football, well documented in its full name. It is noteworthy, however, that

St Pauli, true to their subversive reputation, have recently taken to sending up the pretensions of clubs who disguise their origins [...] by adopting the slogan, in English: “FC St Pauli: NOT established since 1910” – that is, not part of ‘the establishment’, as they like to think.¹²

Other than revealing much of the fans’ identity, this slogan also demonstrates their dislike to their local rivals. Certainly, many cities are home to renowned football rivalries, yet the one between FC St. Pauli and Hamburger Sport-Verein is rather unusual. As any football fan would have you believe, a good reason for any traditional football rivalry to transpire dictates that the clubs concerned compete for the same trophy, yet FC St. Pauli are nowhere near competing with their local rivals and, therefore, their football rivalry cannot possibly be associated with success on the pitch. Compared to the limited success of FC St. Pauli, which amounts to nothing more than their occasional presence in the Bundesliga, Hamburger Sport-Verein can boast an impressive collection of trophies, including a European Cup (the predecessor of today’s Champions League) and a European Cup Winners’ Cup at European level, as well as three domestic titles (six championships and three cup competitions). Furthermore, the mere fact that FC St. Pauli and Hamburger Sport-Verein have co-existed in the same division no more than on seven occasions – since the inception of the Bundesliga in 1963 – leaves little room to suggest that it is competing in the same division and playing regular competitive games against one another that maintain their rivalry. Hence, assessing the origins of their rivalry – and FC St. Pauli’s philosophy more precisely – should commence outside the domain of football proper.

The history of St. Pauli

FC St. Pauli is a club rooted firmly in its surrounding district. The history of this district is one of being at odds with the main city of Hamburg and the state authorities: It has always been a marginalized area of Hamburg. Located in the city’s outskirts until the nineteenth century it was for several centuries the dumping ground of unpleasant production sites. Buildings were makeshift, with the aim of keeping the area open for cannons in case of war. The city of Hamburg reserved the right to tear down buildings as they liked. The advent of steam ships in the nineteenth century changed St. Pauli’s character. Seen as dangerous by the city of Hamburg, these ships were made to harbour at St. Pauli, spurring all the services demanded by the sea-farers. This cements the perception of the district as the underdog and morally loose area. In 1830, the district officially becomes ‘St. Pauli,’ with proper rights to its justice system and representation in the city council. In 1894 it is finally politically integrated into Hamburg, but maintains its affective distance. The year 1910 is the year of the official establishment of FC St. Pauli.

In Nazi times, the district seemed again to boast an uneasy relationship to authority, which is not surprising considering that many activities in the district, such as playing swing music, transvestism, and open prostitution were prosecuted under that regime. Overall, St. Pauli seems to have had higher levels of resistance than most other parts of Germany. In post-war times, Hamburg’s biggest black markets, including sex in exchanged goods, were located in St. Pauli, another instance of survival by defiance of the authorities.

The 1960s saw a shift from prostitution subculture to music youth culture, with the advent of a rich youth subcultural club scene featuring the young Beatles among

other later superstars. Paired up with the sexual revolution and general social liberalization the St. Pauli of today was created. However, at the same time, there was an establishment backlash, the so called 'lex St. Pauli', that regulates to this day the areas of prostitution, thus leading to an increased recruitment of prostitutes for the new brothels.

A major decline of the area took place in the 1970s and 1980s, with an increasing link of rejuvenated prostitution with other organized crime, including the presence of the Hell's Angels leading to heavy criminalization of the district and the advent of hard drugs and violent gang wars. Hard handed state response led to the dispersal or at least relocation of the controlling gangs, a gap quickly filled in the 1980s and 1990s by migrant groups. Competition led to high levels of violence. In this era, FC St. Pauli players were rewarded for scoring a goal with a free visit to a brothel. In 1977, the team was rewarded for entering the 1. Bundesliga with a trip to the entertainment mile in Mallorca's Ballermann area, financed by the major Reeperbahn brothel owner Mariano Perez. In general, the club was very much embedded in its district, not only in terms of its commercial activities, but also in relation to the working class background of those populating it.

Over time, the district of St. Pauli has attracted considerable interest from the financial and property markets, often meeting the resistance of the local population, a prime example being the 1981 squatter movement in Hafenstrasse in what was then perceived as an expression of the long-standing maltreatment by Hamburg's local authorities. Years later, their resistance met with success when in 1995 the Hafenstrasse architecture was cast into law by the city council. Generally, gentrification of St. Pauli has changed its character rapidly, with the advent of larger, more expensive accommodation, expensive restaurants and office buildings, as well as attempts at commercialization through malls that combine shopping with entertainment. It was one of the squatters of Hafenstrasse who allegedly introduced the Jolly Roger flag in the club's football ground – what shall occupy us again later when we investigate the tension between anti-establishment and commercialization.

During the 1980s, there was a superposition of the domain of sports in St. Pauli by specific values. These value ascriptions came largely from entirely different social contexts, particularly the leftist youth culture. What is notable, in this context, is the eviction and removal of the caravan colony Bambule in 2002. FC St. Pauli fans supported the cause of the inhabitants, their demonstrations meeting with police action. After clashing with the police, club members met with management and succeeded in convincing the latter to make a public statement denouncing the police action. The fans achieved this largely by pinning down the club management to committing to the identity of a socially critical club.

Politics in Hamburg

Hamburg is one of Germany's sixteen *Länder*, or else a federated state of the Federal Republic of Germany, also known as a *Stadtstaat* (city-state), that is made up of seven boroughs that are subdivided into 105 quarters. As a city-state, elections in Hamburg are held for the state parliament, the lower house of the federal parliament, and for the boroughs. For the purpose of the present chapter, we shall examine electoral results at state level and in St. Pauli, our undivided attention focusing on the performance of left wing parties exclusively. The task at hand is far from complicated for it is only a

handful of such parties that contested the elections over the past 40 years; therefore, we shall proceed with some relevant historical information.

The *Deutsche Kommunistische Partei* (German Communist Party, DKP) was formed in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1968 to take the place of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (Communist Party of Germany, KPD) which had been banned in 1956 by the Federal Constitutional Court. Interestingly, the same year that the DKP was formed the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands/Marxisten-Leninisten* (Communist Party of Germany/Marxist-Leninist, KPD/ML) came to existence in Hamburg with a corresponding branch being founded in the German Democratic Republic by the mid-1970s. The KPD/ML was a Marxist-Leninist party that rejected the DKP as too revisionist. While lifting the KPD's ban was apparently never an option, the government's attempts to establish closer relations with its counterpart in East Germany in the late 1960s allowed room for the formation of the DKP in order to cater for the needs of the West German communists. Despite the DKP's poor performance in federal elections, the party's political survival was secured throughout the Cold War period by means of funding from the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Socialist Unity Party of Germany, SED) – East Germany's forty-year-long ruling party and successor of the KPD. Ever since the SED ceased to exist following the country's reunification, however, the electoral success of the DKP has been in constant decline, thus forcing a number of its members to join the *Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus* (Party of Democratic Socialism, PDS), which was considered as the descendant of the SED. Its prospects differing little from those of the other left-wing parties, the PDS merged in 2007 with the *Arbeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit–Die Wahlalternative* (Labour and Social Justice–The Electoral Alternative, WASG) to form *Die Linke* (The Left).

Year	St. Pauli						Hamburg					
	Local elections			State elections			Local elections			State elections		
	DKP	KPD	PDS									
1970	4			3.6			1.9			1.7		
1974	5.023			4.4	0.6		2.1			2.2	0.3	
1978	2.7			2.3	0.2		1.3			1	0.1	
1982a	0.9			0.8			0.4			0.4		
1982b	1.4			1.2	0.2		0.7			0.6	0.1	
1986				0.4						0.2		
1987												
1991			3.7	0.3		2.7			0.3	0.1		0.5
1993												
1997			6.1			3.7	0.2		0.3			0.7
2001												
2004												

Evidently, during the last 40 years, and up until some of the parties mentioned above became defunct, success in elections was quite limited. While voting at local and state elections in St. Pauli varied little, it is rather obvious that the three left-wing parties in question enjoyed considerable support in that particular quarter of Hamburg, as opposed to their overall electoral results at state level. Their relative decline at both state and local level, nevertheless, certainly becomes manifest when taking into account their complete absence from the 2001 and 2004 elections.¹³

The emergence of *Die Linke*, however, alters the political landscape of Hamburg altogether, particularly in the quarter of St. Pauli. Securing entry to the state parliament through the first ever elections the party contested in 2008 with an overwhelming 6.4%, *Die Linke* repeated its feat in the 2011 claiming a 6% of the popular vote. The party's relative success in Hamburg's state elections is, indeed, noteworthy, but what definitely commands our attention is voting behaviour in St. Pauli where *Die Linke* moved from an admittedly impressive 15% in 2008 to a staggering 20% three years later. Exceeding the voting patterns of the past, Germany's newly found left-wing party obviously enjoys considerable support in St. Pauli, surpassing all other Hamburg quarters with only a few (*Kleiner Grasbrook*, *Steinwerder* and *Sternschanze*) coming within an inch of the 2011 figure. Capitalizing on its electoral success in the quarter of St. Pauli, *Die Linke* advanced an agenda concentrating on social housing, social and cultural projects, youth programs and shelters for women and children, at the same time as the party resisted the construction of luxury apartments and office buildings that could result in the displacement of the locals, while also opposing the repression of the part left-ist and part alternative environment that is St. Pauli.

The strong presence of *Die Linke* in St. Pauli is, of course, associated with the party's involvement in the district, given its stance, for instance, in the Bambule eviction aftermath with the party demanding that the caravan site is reinstalled, in line with its opposition to gentrification for housing purposes and the extension of office space, not to mention what *Die Linke* perceives as 'eventization' (*Eventisierung*) through the development and expansion of entertainment malls. Instead, the party supports movements toward more non-commercial community and assembly centres, as well as sports halls, in all cases encouraging the involvement of the residents of the district. Moreover, the party has 'declare[d] opposition to arbitrary police action against the left-alternative milieu, illegal immigrants, demonstrators, St. Pauli fans, alcohol and drug consuming people who are an obstacle to plans for a commercialized entertainment district.'¹⁴ Whether these demands would be publicly acceptable and financeable by the public sector in an age of austerity is indeed questionable, yet these are exactly the kind of demands that seem to appeal more to the population of this district and which are, of course, in line with the policies supported by the fan project of FC St. Pauli.

In spite of the recent changes towards gentrification, St. Pauli is a very special socio-political environment in Hamburg. It is still home to the red-light district Reeperbahn, which is cordoned off from the sight of under-aged people by the use of gates. Crime figures are much higher than in Hamburg overall: violent crime stands at 65% in St. Pauli compared to 5% in Hamburg, and theft at 31.6% compared to 5.9%, respectively.¹⁵ The district has a much higher population density and smaller housing units than Hamburg overall (density: 9173 persons per km² compared to 2295 persons per km², housing units average a 62.1 m² compared with 72.7 m²). There is a much larger percentage of residents with foreign nationality (21.8% compared to 13.6%), as well as of residents of migrant descent (34.9% compared to 28.1%). Families with at least one dependent member receiving support under Hartz IV (the current German social security system) are more than in Hamburg (12.1 per 100 inhabitants as opposed to 6.1 persons per km²), and unemployment among the 15-to-65 year olds is higher (9% compared with 6.1%), while this age group is overrepresented in the district (there are fewer residents below the age of eighteen (12.5% as opposed to 15.6%), and above the age of 65 (9.3% compared with

19.1%). Social housing units are more plentiful (9.4 per 100 population compared with 5.4 per 100 population), thus indicating the low level of gentrification. Finally, there are fewer households with children in St. Pauli (12.6% compared to 17.8%). With no doubt, the above numbers suggest a certain degree of depravity around the district of St. Pauli, perhaps, reflected in the voting behaviour of the locals.

FC St. Pauli identity

From the mid-1980s onwards, a new section of fans appeared on the terraces of the stadium of FC St. Pauli, one that was seemingly inclined to left-wing ideology. During the 1986–1987 season,

some very different football chants could be heard: ‘Never again fascism! Never again war! Never again Third Division!’, or: ‘Who are the betraying rats? Social Democrats! Whose betrayal we will never see? Surely it is St Pauli!’. Previously the shouted answer to who would never betray the ‘masses’ was simply ‘Anarchy!’ now it was the local football club.¹⁶

Interestingly, another chant was *Volker hört die Signale* on t-shirts, named after goalkeeper Volker Ippig but copying the *Völker hört die Signale* from the lyrics of ‘The Internationale’. The fans’ apparent commitment to anti-fascism, anti-racism and anti-corporatism were echoed since 1989 through *Millerntorn Roar!* the first fanzine of its kind in Germany. Evidently, it was certain racist and fascist incidents that inspired

a section of St Pauli’s supporters to form in 1986 an anti-racist group called *Millerntorn Roar!*, named after the club’s ground, which encouraged the club’s officials to take a staunch position against racism by banning all related chants and banners inside the stadium in 1991. Their success soon attracted the attention of extreme right groups, particularly, fans of neighboring Hamburg SV, thus developing a distinctive form of local rivalry.¹⁷

It is worthy of note that the year after the club’s officials decided to ban all things racist from the stadium every home match was followed by anti-fascist demonstrations. Needless to say, one must not ignore the fact that the district of St. Pauli was revived in the late 1980s, particularly the area of Reeperbahn. The influx of young people attracted the entertainment industry and, soon, the area was transformed into one that appealed much to artists and students looking for decent, low-cost accommodation. Once the area was revived large corporations from the creative industry and information technology sectors arrived, such as the AOL-Europe headquarters located close to FC St. Pauli’s stadium.

Unlike fans of other similar left-wing oriented football clubs such as Associazione Sportiva Livorno Calcio, Associazione Calcio Milan and Bologna Football Club¹⁸ in Italy; Olympique de Marseille in France; Athletic Club Omonoia Nicosia in Cyprus¹⁹; Hapoel Tel Aviv in Israel²⁰; and Cádiz Club de Fútbol S.A.D. in Spain,²¹ to name a few, the leftist identity of FC St. Pauli fans is fairly obscure. Following developments elsewhere in Western Europe during the socially turbulent times that was the 1980s, Hamburg was no stranger to punk music, squatters and anti-nuclear protests – essential ingredients, perhaps, for developing a leftist, anti-establishment rather, movement. However, there seems to be no immediate connection between fans from such a background occupying the terraces of FC St. Pauli’s stadium and the club’s social standing during the 1980s. Indeed, other

than the stadium's proximity to Hafenstrasse, there is little evidence to suggest that attending football matches of FC St. Pauli was a purposeful act.

The club's fans are highly organized and critical, fans that promote an alternative fan movement with a distinct anti-racist and anti-sexist stance, committed to political action and education. The agenda is 'leftist' and centres on the *Fanladen* (fan shop), which is much more than a shop and fan meeting point, but is committed to social education. It is repeatedly referred to as *Heimat* by the fans (a word with a deeply emotional meaning of home as identity) and employs four full-time social workers. As already stated, this community of fans produced the first explicitly anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-homophobic club policy, established the *Fanladen* and the first modern fanzine, the *Millerntor Roar*, both models for contemporary fan life.

Their activities have so far included:

- Anti-fascist projects and activities, such as
 - (a) Anti-fascist research and discussions around this activity (2006).
 - (b) Trip to Israel with a visit to Yad Vashem memorial site (2008).
 - (c) Discussion of the influence of right extremism on the Polish fan scene (2009).
 - (d) Congress in Lüneburg 'Active against Nazis' (2010).
 - (e) Memorial day 'Remember for the Future' to commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz (2010).
 - (f) Party with the theme 'let's go to the brown province in Leipzig' (referring to the colour brown as that of the Nazi movement) (2011).
- Anti-racist and pro-inclusionist activities and projects, such as
 - (a) Anti-racist tournaments.
 - (b) The project *KiezKick*, which was founded in 2002 and engages in socially educative, ethnically and gender inclusive free training and fun activities, won the *Integrationspreis* (integration award) of the City of Hamburg (2006).
 - (c) In 2007, the *Fanladen* received the award 'Ambassador of Tolerance,' awarded jointly by the Ministers of the Interior and of Justice.
 - (d) Discussion 'in favour of diversity and opposition to all forms of discrimination' (2011).
 - (e) Action day 'Why are you at St. Pauli' against racism and discrimination (22.3.2011).
 - (f) Many of the links on the *Fanladen* webpage to anti-racist organizations.
- Humanitarian projects
 - (a) Humanitarian aid for forced labourers in Belarus (2007).
 - (b) *Viva con Agua*, a project promoting access to clean drinking water in developing counties.
- Leftist identification activities like the Fan's solidarity party in *Linker Laden*, leftist shop (2011).

Alongside these activities, the *Fanladen* runs political activities protesting disproportional police action against the *Fanladen* (November 2006), as well as against fans at various matches. The *Fanladen* publishes statements on such occurrences and negotiates with the club's management for supportive statements issued by the club. The latter is not always granted, leading to conflicts between club and fans, which occasionally result in open letters to the club president (as in April and December of 2006). The *Fanladen* also negotiates with the police to avoid the escalation of conflict and develop mutually acceptable policing strategies (e.g. April 2007). Occasionally, the police get accused of raiding the *Fanladen*, actions objected to primarily on the grounds that this compromises the safe space a social work project requires. The uneasy relationship with the police seems to be a contradiction to the official awards received by the *Fanladen*.

The content of two letters to the club president, dated April and December 2006, are of particular interest. The April letter accused the president of ignoring the council of fans and leading talks about fans rather than with fans. It then states that 'the club would not be known and loved way outside the borders of Hamburg as is currently the case, were it not for its fans'.²² The December letter demanded a statement of solidarity with the *Fanladen*, 'Should this not happen, we have to conclude that the presidency [...] takes a stance in opposition to the very people who gave this club its wider European reputation during the last two decades'.²³ This suggests a high level of self-awareness as being part of the 'brand' FC St. Pauli. The club presidency has to take the fans seriously in such occasions, since the statutes of FC St. Pauli give a powerful role to the fan representatives on the board.

The apparent significance of the above activities notwithstanding, one event certainly stands out in terms of the club's politicized character. In the summer of 2006, a few weeks before the official FIFA World Cup kicked off in Germany, FC St. Pauli played hosts to a different kind of world cup. Gibraltar, Greenland, Tibet, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Zanzibar – all disputed political entities lacking recognition from FIFA – were afforded the opportunity to play 'international' football and, therefore, internationalize their cause despite strong opposition from China and the world governing body of football. Each of the parties invited is somehow entangled in political controversy. Gibraltar, the apple of discord between Britain and Spain ever since the early eighteenth century, is a British overseas territory that has twice (1967 and 2002) rejected Spanish sovereignty; today, Spain denies Gibraltar international status in football. Greenland is an autonomous region of the Kingdom of Denmark that, unlike the Faroe Islands, have not been granted membership with FIFA on account of natural conditions not permitting the growth of grass. Tibet, an autonomous region of China, is often characterized by political unrest due to its separatist campaign and related struggle against Chinese rule. The self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus emerged after the invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and is recognized by Turkey alone. Finally, Zanzibar has been denied membership with FIFA too, because of its political union with Tanzania. It is noteworthy that Monaco was also invited but decided against taking part in the tournament, allegedly, because its dates coincided with the more prestigious Formula One race. In the absence of a sixth team that would have ensured the smooth running of the competition (two groups of three, of which the top two would qualify for the semi-finals), the hosts never hesitated inventing the Republic of St. Pauli so as to represent Hamburg's quarter with a team involving no first team players from FC St. Pauli, as per the request of the German Football

Association. Given the controversial political status of all invited contestants, FC St. Pauli succeeded in crossing national borders to defy, by all means, the norms of international football, establishing themselves once again as non-conformist.

Branding FC St. Pauli

The club's anti-establishment identity seems to have run parallel to a certain gentrification and commercialization of the club itself, or at least its insignia – the Jolly Roger. The Jolly Roger has particular significance to the city of Hamburg, since it refers to the well-known story of a fourteenth century pirate called Klaus Störtebeker who according to legend was betrayed by the Hanseatic League resulting in his being beheaded in Hamburg in 1401. He has since been celebrated as the underdog to the mighty and powerful merchants of the city of Hamburg and makes for an obvious symbol of integration for a group defining itself as anti-establishment. The story of the skull-and-crossbones symbol maintains that a

punk-rock veteran in Hamburg called Mabuse (named after a figure in a film by German director Fritz Lang) was responsible for it. Mabuse lived during the 1980s at Hafenstrasse and brought his pirate flag one day with him to the Hafenstrasseblock. Originally, the squatters honoured the memory of pirate Klaus Störtebeker ... with the flag.²⁴

The apparent reason that the skull and crossbones became an appropriate symbol for FC St. Pauli fans to display was the club's evident resilience for having won three successive promotions before, eventually, reaching the Bundesliga. The symbol has since been widely used and during the 2000–2001 season was even 'displayed in the middle of the collar'²⁵ of the club's outfit.

Before long, the use of the Jolly Roger became commercialized (further developed by Steph Braun from the firm Texman for use on t-shirts sold also in the *Fanladen*, until the Merchandize GmbH realized the marketing potential of the symbol and secured the rights as a trademark). According to the German weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT, the men's fashion designer Herr von Eden produced a FC St. Pauli fashion line, which is on offer in the FC St. Pauli Fanshop. The distribution of the merchandize has been outsourced to the marketing firm Upsolut. The firm's marketing strategy was so successful that, as opposed to any other club, the brand appeal of FC St. Pauli is wholly independent of the sportive success of the club. Its merchandize market position is located between fourth and seventh place, with Upsolut making use of the social demographic context and the relevant 'sense of belonging' to ensure success. It is important to note that cheap t-shirts are available in the range, and they screen carefully the products that bear the Jolly Roger logo, since Upsolut are aware that the fans should not be alienated. That Upsolut have the rights to the merchandising until 2034, however, clearly means that success is not fully shared with the club.

The successful branding of the club was only possible through the utilization of the Jolly Roger since 2002. The logic of the logo, which symbolizes the brand, is that it is a visual icon that involves other associations and connotations. Logos can be used to express our identity, and skilful marketing assures that this identity is provided for the logo. When part of branding, such a logo, even if innocently introduced, becomes part of its commodification, commodifying what is associated with it alongside given that

We could think of the logo as the extension of advertising, a symbol rather than a vehicle, which becomes deployed across a diverse range of media, communicating the bare minimum of information within the fastest time. [...] Brands and logos are meaning-generating devices.²⁶

Brand awareness arises by cultivating associations with the brand (FC St. Pauli) and intangible values (leftism, anti-establishment). Against this background, anti-consumerism may well disguise consumption.

The logo is an icon, a word derived from a religious context that is superbly adequate to the logo of a football club. Like the religious icon, it presumes the knowledge of a more complex context (in our Jolly Roger case from the Störtebeker story to the anti-establishment history of FC St. Pauli). The religious analogy may be quite apt for a fan culture of devotees to a club. As the logo is increasingly adopted, it gains immediacy, a speed of perception that allows it to achieve ubiquity and can migrate across diverse media, giving it an economy of expression. In this way, it is able to bypass our logical and evaluative thought processes. This process can turn against the originators of the logo. Mark Paterson relates the story of a protest website of Microsoft users against the irreplaceability of the battery of one of their iPod models – the same process happens when the ‘pirates’ fight against their own club management. It is an act of extreme love, a basic belief that the logo has to keep its promise, even though ‘Brands are amoral in their lust to ... sell at the highest price. They are intent on becoming ubiquitous as they move from one country and one continent to another, ignoring or overwhelming venerable ethnic, cultural and religious traditions’.²⁷ It is important to note that the club currently claims more than eleven million fans around the world, as suggested by its sports marketing agency UFA Sports. Perhaps a direct result of the club’s fandom, a staggering \$8.6 million worth of merchandize per year is what FC St. Pauli claims.

The branding of the club follows the same pattern demonstrated in branding generally: the association of a product with things outside its plain use value (enjoying football compared with a leftist/anti-establishment identity), whereby the usual process of branding, the gradual building of a relationship between the product and the consumer is given in this case from beforehand (the football club-football fans association). However, once a brand, the club can increase support in places geographically, as well as culturally, far from its home base and thus create an imagined community. In the case of FC St. Pauli, the move to commercialization became a necessity in 2002 when the club faced bankruptcy, the same year the Jolly Roger superseded the gates of Hamburg as the symbol of the club. The financial crisis led to a democratization of internal structures by stimulating the fifty full-time and 150 part-time employees of the club to form a workers’ council (*Betriebsrat*), a legally protected workers’ representative body, but also an urgent need to secure sources of income. The *Fanladen* was an obvious outlet for club merchandize, which seems to contrast its anti-establishment, anti-capitalist self-image. Indeed, being a very engaged fan community a new movement emerged to defy this commercialization – the *Sozialromantiker*, a term with derogative connotations denoting a person with unrealistic and idealistic visions of a better social world. This movement created an alternative logo, the Jolly Rouge – a skull and cross-bone symbol on a red (for leftism) flag. It accuses the club of selling out to business by commercializing club and stadium alike. Areas of concern include a sprouting of business seats and boxes on the new stand, with one of the boxes

rented to a strip club (with pole dancing taking place during the matches!) and the big displays of sponsors, thus prompting the fans to adopt an aggressive approach arguing that

We will boycott the consumption in the stadium and the visit of the stadium. We will spam your sponsors' e-mail inboxes, we will work with the press, we will order an extraordinary general meeting of the club members. In a nutshell: we will do everything until you realize how many we are!

And in reminiscence of the Communist Manifesto: 'The time of meetings and talking is over. It's enough!'²⁸

The club seems to be engaged in a rope-walk in regards to utilizing its image, nurturing this image for utilization and the potential ruin of that very image through its commercial activities. How important the fans still are in the running of the club is best illustrated in the latest venture of the club to raise money to stay competitive: in late 2011, the club issued bonds. About 5000 investors have purchased bonds in a total value of six million EUR. Most of these investors are the club's fans that see this as a way to express their identification with the club rather than a thrifty investment. Financial experts see the bonds as high risk for the 6% return. The future will show if this type of identification with the club, which requires true community and not neo-tribes or imagined communities, will persist in the face of the commercialization of its very own identity.

A final remark

There is little doubt that the above is, of course, in line with the Fundamental Principles (*Leitlinien*) of St. Pauli FC in that

- (1) In its totality, consisting of members, staff, fans and honorary officers, St. Pauli FC is a part of the society by which it is surrounded and so is affected both directly and indirectly by social changes in the political, cultural and social spheres.
- (2) St. Pauli FC is conscious of the social responsibility this implies, and represents the interests of its members, staff, fans and honorary officers in matters not just restricted to the sphere of sport.
- (3) St. Pauli FC is the club of a particular city district, and it is to this that it owes its identity. This gives it a social and political responsibility in relation to the district and the people who live there.²⁹

Indeed, FC St. Pauli has been affected by all sorts of changes manifested in its immediate environment, has actively demonstrated its interest in matters that go beyond the realm of football, and never fails to emphasize the essence of identity. Driven by an identity that commands social reform, the fans of FC St. Pauli have certainly played quite an impressive role in reshaping fandom in German football, particularly, following the country's reunification. Radicalizing the local society might not have been their intention; however, St. Pauli made available the necessary socio-political conditions for expressing radicalism through football culture. Evidently, the issues that concerned the local population in the 1980s were ultimately voiced by means of attributing an alternate interpretation to what fandom entails. Considering that fans of FC St. Pauli succeeded in addressing in and around the club's football ground those socio-political matters that merit the attention of

political authorities, it suffices to say that their politicization was, of course, the end result of relevant activities and campaigns, thus the reason the club was afforded a leftist following. What will undoubtedly warrant further investigation in the near future, nevertheless, is the club's leftist identity against the background of commercialization.

Realizing the success of the Jolly Roger icon as a symbol of non-conformity and resistance to the establishment – initially apparent in the district, but also an iconic value for fans in geographically distant areas – the club soon capitalized on it for the sole purpose of improving its finances. Although one might argue that commercialization was a necessary evil, particularly when taking into account the dire financial situation the club was in by 2002, it turned out to be so successful that it catapulted the club up into the rungs of the world leaders regarding turnover of football-related merchandise. Now the club has to try and balance its economic success with identity, thus posing an interesting dilemma: stick to a non-conformist, anti-capitalist image and limit its economic potential, or cash in and alienate its fans. Should those fans organized in the *Sozialromantiker* movement convince the club to abandon commercialization, the lack of income will certainly bring the club to its knees. The club maintaining its lucrative business, on the other hand, will probably guarantee its economic viability; yet disappointing its fans may compromise the very same identity it seeks to exploit with irreparable consequences. Needless to say, a cautious approach to safeguarding the essence of the club's identity while also adhering to its commercialization is imperative for the club to escape uneasy situations in economic and football terms alike.

There is no doubt that FC St. Pauli is a club that sheltered the less moderate and, even less, socially acceptable elements of society throughout the closing decades of the previous century – a time period that has marked contemporary German history. Playing football under the banners of leftism and non-conformism, the club succeeded in developing a rather appealing identity that was soon after exported around the world, thus gaining unprecedented support for a club that has yet to win a trophy. The economic realities of today, nevertheless, dictate that romantic notions of the past no longer suffice for a business to survive and FC St. Pauli – fans must realize – is a business. The leftist identity of the club has already been damaged by commercialization, fans would have you believe. The question, of course, is whether the fans will continue to resist it with effect.

Notes

1. Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes*.
2. Anderson, *Imagined communities*.
3. Klein and Meuser. *Ernste Spiele*, 8 (our translation).
4. Kassimeris, *Football Comes Home*, 57.
5. Blackshaw, 'Contemporary community theory and football,' 326.
6. *Ibid.*, 328.
7. Brown, Grabbe and Mellor, 'Introduction: football and community,' 307.
8. McFarland, 'Building a Mass Activity,' 215.
9. Giulianotti, *Football*, 15.
10. McClancy, *Sport Identity and Ethnicity*, 4.
11. Kassimeris, *Football Comes Home*, 67.
12. Hesse-Lichtenberger, *Tor!*, 22.
13. Statistical Office of Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein.
14. *St. Pauli für alle statt Gentrification für Yuppies* (our translation).

15. Statistisches Amt für Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein. (all statistical data in this paragraph refers to 2010, or 2009 where 2010 data was not available)
16. Martins, 'Here to Stay with St Pauli,' 180.
17. Kassimeris, *European Football in Black and White*, 66.
18. Walsh and Brown, 'Football supporters' relations with their clubs,' 90.
19. Kartakoulis, Kriemadis and Pouloukas, 'Cyprus: A football crazy nation?,' 241–242.
20. Ben-Porat, 'Death to the arabs,' 9–10.
21. Spaaij, 'Football hooliganism as a transnational phenomenon,' 424.
22. Sprecherrat, *Offener Brief* (our translation).
23. Sprecherrat, *Wer Solidarität verweigert*.
24. Martins, 'Here to Stay with St Pauli,' 189.
25. Brux, *From a symbol of rebellion to a protected brand*.
26. Paterson, *Consumption and Everyday Life*. 200
27. Olins, *On Brand*.
28. St. Pauli NU.
29. Fundamental Principles of St. Pauli FC.

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