YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRAJECTORIES THROUGH ANTI-ISLAM(IST) AND EXTREME RIGHT MILIEUS: COUNTRY LEVEL REPORT POLAND

Radical football fans

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DARE: Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality

Young people's trajectories through anti-Islam(ist) and extreme right milieus: Country level report

Poland

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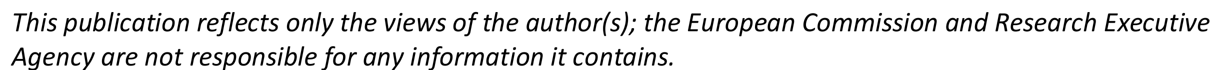
This project has received funding from the European Union's H2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 725349.

This publication reflects only the views of the author(s); the European Commission and Research Executive Agency are not responsible for any information it contains.



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Executive Summary:

The milieu of the radical football fans was chosen as the subject of study due to its long-standing reputation for extreme behaviour, including a propensity for violence. Moreover, it is important to explore football culture as an ideological channel or medium for facilitating right wing radicalisation.

We understand the concept of the milieu in a broad sense to comprise the people, the physical and the social conditions and events in which someone acts or lives. A radical(ising) milieu is a space where radical or extreme messages are encountered, either online or offline. In the context of this research, the milieu can be understood as the football stadium or the football club, but most importantly as a social network and a communicative space of football fans influenced by radical ideology.

In Poland, football culture has been used as a cultural resource and political tool by nationalist movements promoting particular versions of national memory and identity. Expressions of ideological (e.g. nationalist) symbolism in football culture can be perceived as a significant element of the contemporary construction of group identities. They also serve as a tool for constructing a vision of the enemy, excluded from the imagined community, and for vilifying 'the other'. In many cases, the performative repertoire of identity-formation rituals in football culture draws upon nationalist imagery. This text will analyse and compare selected examples of such expressions in Polish football fan cultures, with a focus on the question of radicalisation.

The rituals, ideologies and patterns of behaviour embedded in football fan culture are not limited to the confines of the stadium. On the contrary, they can be observed in numerous other settings. The same banners and chants, with their origin in the stadium, can be witnessed, for instance, during street demonstrations taking place on historical anniversaries such as the annual Polish Independence Day march in Warsaw (11 November). In this way, the ideological component which was brought into the fan culture from the 'outside' is amplified and channeled back into the broader social environment well beyond the world of football.

One of the main aims in this report is to explore the role of masculinity in young men transitioning into football-related right-wing violent extremism. We argue that radical fans ('fanatics') present young men with an image and model for what it means to be a strong (Polish) man. We explore the role of radical fan culture in the process of young men's transition into adulthood through an anthropological lens focusing on 'rites of passage'. It should be emphasized that within the framework of the research significant attention was devoted to the issue of diversity of views and individual trajectories.

The field research was based on in-depth interviews conducted by the Polish DARE research team from Collegium Civitas university among football fans in several Polish cities in 2018 and 2019. The empirical material encompasses the researchers' notes and observations. Other materials used in the analysis include secondary literature about the political aspects of football as a social phenomenon as well as additional information and documentation on Polish football culture and radicalisation collected by the co-authors.

1. Introduction

The culture of football is an important channel of political expression and socialisation in both Western and Eastern European societies. On the one hand, the football stadium can be viewed as a key site for identity-formation processes, while, on the other hand, expressions of ideological (e.g. national) symbolism in the football culture constitutes a significant element of the contemporary construction of national identities. Such expressions also serve as a tool for constructing a vision of the enemy, excluded from the imagined community, and for vilifying 'the other' (Schmitt, 2012). In many cases, the performative repertoire of identity-formation rituals in football culture draws upon historical imagery. In Poland, football culture has been used as a cultural resource and political tool by nationalist movements promoting particular versions of national 'memory' and 'identity' and symbolic propaganda theatre where the most taboo and desired ideals of the current Polish right-wing populist movements are supported and presented. This report analyses and compares selected examples of such expressions in Polish football fan cultures. Specifically, it explores a particular milieu of, and trajectory into, right wing radicalism through the study of Polish football fan culture.

Over the last two decades, football supporters' cultures have become important vehicles for the construction and dissemination of particular versions of national identity discourses with a strong emphasis on a certain view of national history and its heroes as well as the nation's alleged historical enemies. In turn, the prevalence of nationalist discourse at sports (football) events has influenced and reinforced the historical and political discourses outside of the setting of the stadium. Increasingly visible ties between right-wing extremist (RWE) organisations and the football fan community are also observable. Right-wing extremists have become dominant in fan groups, recruiting participants from among them for RWE demonstrations and as members of the organisation, and organising political demonstrations at stadiums of an openly extreme right-wing nature.

The social and political aspects of sports culture are often overlooked in academic analyses of Central and Eastern European societies and politics. One of the few English-language authors who devoted a full book to essays on Eastern European football, Jonathan Wilson, points to 'the extraordinary cultural fact of football, its universality, its ability to draw together people from utterly different backgrounds' (Wilson, 2006: 4). In the context of Eastern Europe, he notes, the recent history of football in the post-communist countries 'is also, in an indirect way, the story of capitalism, and its effect on the socialist economies of the east, the story of how football has dealt with the new ideology and its new set of masters' (ibid.). Indeed, the Polish football culture exists simultaneously in a regional and global context, resulting in a complex mixture of cultural, political and economic influences (Kossakowski, 2017, 2020).

This milieu was chosen as the subject of study due to its long-standing reputation for extreme behaviour, including a propensity for violence. Moreover, it is important to explore football culture as an ideologised channel or medium for facilitating right wing radicalisation. In the second decade of the 21st century, the right-wing national radicalism of some fans, referred to in the report as 'fanatics', became a component of the political scene in Poland and the longstanding activity of RWE organisations, and their infiltration of this environment, has contributed to this.

On one important level, the football culture of Poland belongs to the global industry of football as the most popular sport in the (post)modern world. This large segment of contemporary popular culture is characterised by its high-level of commercialisation and trans-national appeal. Thanks to satellite television and the Internet, its audiences are often more global than local in nature. As a result of globalisation, contemporary football is also characterised by the mobility of players and other sports professionals and leads to a large degree of cultural diversity in the professional environment. Even in countries with relatively small numbers of 'non-white' populations (such as Poland), professional football

teams are usually diverse and multi-cultural. In addition to the flows of capital and accompanying changes of club ownership, this mobility is often criticised for allegedly weakening the bonds of affiliation, an 'organic' connection with a particular team or a community. At the same time, paradoxically, the social function of football as an identity-building, communal setting has intensified in recent decades. Nevertheless, the communal aspects of 'football culture' have often taken some new forms, which are often only loosely related to the game itself. Instead of 'supporting' a team, fan culture has frequently shifted to focusing on an expression and celebration of the fans' collective identities. In this way, football fan culture has drifted away from football in its more narrow meaning as a physical game. The football spectacle takes place as much on the terraces as it does on the pitch. As a result, new significant issues of interest for Polish football fans have emerged in their spectacular activities (banners, fan choreographies, chants), including politics and national history.

This raises another important dimension of the Polish football fans' community, namely the potential for its mobilisation as a vehicle of far right violence. This is not a phenomenon exclusive to Poland; in other countries, fans have become social or political actors (Perasović and Mustapic, 2017). In this report, we explore the mechanisms through which this occurs in relation to activism linked to various cultural and political varieties of right wing extremism.

In this study, we understand radicalisation as the process by which individuals or groups come to embrace attitudes, or engage in actions, that support violence in the pursuit of extremist causes.[1] It is open to question as to whether radicalisation necessarily leads to the isolation of the radicalised group or individuals from 'mainstream' society and its values or whether radicalisation can occur in a way that is in alignment with dominant social, cultural and political phenomena.

We understand the concept of the milieu in a broad sense, comprising the people, the physical and the social conditions and events in which someone acts or lives. A radical(ising) milieu is a space where radical or extreme messages are encountered, either online or offline. In the context of this research, the milieu can be understood as the football stadium or the football club, but most importantly as a social network and a communicative space of football fans influenced by radical ideology.

One factor common to racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or various anti-immigrant attitudes and actions all over the world is that they draw on what might be called a crisis or insecurity of male identity. As Kimmel (2018: 13) writes:

> Gender – masculinity – provides both the psychological inspiration to young men to join these groups and the social glue that keeps them involved. Challenging violent extremism, therefore, means engaging these young men as men, not simply as jihadists or Neo-Nazis or white supremacists. It means offering them new ways by which they can prove their masculinity, to feel that they are real men, that their lives matter.

In this report, we also explore the role of masculinity in young men transitioning into football-related right-wing violent extremism. We agree with Kimmel that, 'We cannot fully understand violent extremist movements without gender analysis. And, more than that, we cannot adequately meet this challenge without understanding how gender – masculinity - is so deeply and intimately enmeshed in the participants' experience' (Kimmel, 2018: 8-9). Based on this, we hypothesise that 'fanatics' represent to young men what it means to be a strong (and Polish) man and, to explore this, we adopt an anthropological approach focusing on rites of passage. Moreover, we anticipate that young men in football fan groups often feel a sense of indignation that is not expressed in the language of socio-economic grievances.

[1] Core definitions employed in this and other case studies conducted within the DARE project can be found at: http://www.dare-h2020.org/concepts.html.

Rather a sense of lost or weak identity leads them to seek a leader, a 'second father', or somebody to follow.

The theoretical basis for the analysis of 'fanatics' in Poland presented here draws on Arnold van Gennep's (1908) famous notion of 'rites of passage' which was confirmed by Victor Turner who developed the three phases of passage from one culturally defined state or status to another: preliminal, liminal, and postliminal. Liminality itself, according to Turner, is a complex phase or condition. It is often the scene and time for the emergence of society's deepest values in the form of sacred dramas and objects—the re-enactment periodically of cosmogonic narratives of deeds of saintly, godly, or heroic establishers of morality, basic institutions, or way of approaching transcendent beings or powers.

Liminality, in our analysis of one small but noisy group of football fans, is used to describe the 'scene' in which the deepest values of modern Polish society are revealed in the form of dramas and 'sacred' objects. One such dramatically depicted value, it is suggested, is that of the role of the contemporary Polish man, played out in a society that is neither industrial nor post-industrial, neither traditional nor postmodern but in transition, just like the men and women living in it.

2. Setting the scene

2.1 Historical context

Sports - and football in particular - have long been associated with national (and nationalist) symbolism and ideology. The rise of mass-audience sports in the twentieth century accompanied the emergence of the modern nation-state as a key unit of social organisation. Arguably, football was the first mass participation sport. The sport has served also as a major 'nationalising' factor; a means of constructing and embedding national identity among the masses. As Gabriel Kuhn (2011: 62) writes, 'football truly seems to help nationally defined communities overcome internal strife and find collective identity'. Throughout its history, football has been largely organised along national lines (with national federations overseeing the game, the national leagues and national teams). Rivalry between national teams representing states is widely considered as the most central element of the sport's structure, culminating in major international tournaments such as the World Cup or European Championships.

In the case of Poland (as well as several other East European nations), the emergence of a modern national identity occurred in the absence of an independent nation-state and its array of national institutions. Therefore, arguably, the sports club had an additional function. It could, on occasion, serve as a substitute point of reference in national identity building. As the historical circumstances of Polish statehood and nationhood in the twentieth century changed, so too did the social function of football. Poland was not an independent state until 1918 and the first clubs established in the first decades of the twentieth century often served as a focus of a national identity without the nation-state. In 1919, the Polish Football Association was formed as one of the symbols of the new Polish state. During World War II and the Nazi occupation of Poland, playing football was prohibited, but games continued as a form of resistance. After 1945, football was strongly controlled by the newly established Communist regime and it served its propaganda purposes. At the same time, the fans' movement and the stands were, or became, along with the decay of the system, a place where resistance to the authorities was born, combining anti-communist, hooligan and anti-police elements (Wąsowicz, 2015). Eventually, with the economic and political transformation of 1989, which brought with it unemployment and a decline in living standards during the transition period and generated much anger and frustration, the stadiums became a place of even more politicised expression. This, combined, with the transfer to Poland of the trend already visible in Western Europe, especially in England, towards infiltration of the fan movement by RWE, meant that Polish

stadiums of the nineties became marked by racist and xenophobic symbolism and aggressive clashes with the police or between groups of fans of different teams.

The commemoration and celebration of the legacy of ethnic diversity by fans has remained notably absent in contemporary Eastern European football. An exception that proves the rule is an exhibition on multicultural history of football in Poland prepared by the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association as a part of the UEFA Euro 2012 Respect Diversity- Football Unites campaign. This exhibition was presented in several Polish stadiums as well as schools and youth clubs. In contrast, numerous displays (such as large banners) in football stadiums take place extolling ethno-national pride and commemorating national(ist) heroes. This would appear to be a consequence of the current hegemony of an ethno-nationalist perspective on the history of sports in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland.

Sports, including football, have been frequently used as a political tool of legitimisation as well as mobilisation by political leaders and movements. The oft-quoted saying that 'football is a substitute for war' has been frequently true especially in totalitarian and authoritarian systems. In the words of the acclaimed football writer Simon Kuper (2002), 'it is a rare dictator who ignores soccer'. In this vein, Boff Whalley (2011: 7) points to 'football's traditional masculinity, conservatism, racism, homophobia and nationalism' while also acknowledging the progressive potential of the popular game.

As shown by Ryszard Kapuściński (1992), the game can also serve as a pretext for war or at least one of the blocks in the build-up towards conflict between nations. Indeed, sport was commonly utilised as a way of raising new generations of physically fit, and patriotically minded, conscripts for the military forces of the nation states (Kuligowski, 2012). The historical role of football in the process of 'nationalization' or 'patriotic education' in the case of Poland was stressed, for example, by the football historian Józef Hałys who suggests that the goal was 'through sports, through football, to mould people of diverse educational backgrounds, professions, even religions - into good Poles' (Hałys cited in Świąder, 2006).

2.2 Contemporary context

The analysis of the contemporary history of Polish radical fans helps to understand how some of them - mainly young men - ended up in the political arena. In other words, and more specifically, how they have become far-right political actors.

In our study, we focus on the milieu of 'radical fans' who self-describe as 'fanatics'. The milieu of radical fans (referred to as 'fanatics') at the centre of this study, is characterised by a set of subcultural patterns of behaviour and rituals, functioning in a specific socio-political context (changes taking place in Poland in the second decade of the 21st century).

The radicalisation of football fans in Poland is the result of several processes. First, its formation is largely influenced by decisions taken by various political actors who came to view fans as constituting a political resource that can be used in a number of ways. An example of how the 'policy' towards fans fluctuated can be seen by comparing liberal governments from the time of Prime Minister Donald Tusk with the right-wing government after 2015 (led by the head of the PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość or Law and Justice party). For the political liberals, the organisation of EURO 2012 by Poland, together with Ukraine, placed safety of participants in this important event at the top of the political agenda. This period is considered to be a turning point for football fans, as many of the government's actions were perceived as repressive (e.g. removal of offensive banners from stadiums, arrests of hooligan leaders, etc.). From this time also comes a kind of founding myth, to which fanatics return, honoring their leaders and heroes who fought unequally with the police and security forces.

The new right-wing government used a different tactic not only by allowing annual national marches on Independence Day, which were organised by the nationalist leaders of the football fans movement, but gave them open support. Although the mainstream media pointed to threats to the security of citizens, the state-controlled media did not stigmatise xenophobic slogans and aggressive behavior directed against minorities. Opposition media referred to these groups as '*kibiole*', which is the Polish term closest to 'hooligans'. They also pointed to the growing danger of politicising this far-right movement.

Another factor that cannot be overestimated is the rapid development of social media, or rather, in this case, *anti*-social media (Vaidhuyanathan, 2018). The growing importance of content posted on social media has been recorded in many ways, with the most important finding being the potential threat posed to democracy (Wyle, 2019). In the case of fanatics, Internet 2.0 was certainly conducive to the strengthening of the radical football fans movement, which took place as a result of a new wave of hate, this time directed not only at supporters of hostile clubs but also against minorities, who became a kind of common enemy. As it is known, aggressive attacks against all kinds of minorities are a factor accompanying attacks on democratic institutions and democracy per se (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018).

Why did we choose football fans, or more precisely 'fanatics', as the subject of our study? The general social and political context of the study is the rise of authoritarianism and populism, which has manifested itself in various parts of the world including Hungary, Russia, Venezuela as well as in Poland. These movements draw on anti-immigrant and homophobic mass sentiments, which, in Poland, became widespread in 2015, and gained political support after the parliamentary elections won by the PiS party. The PiS has gone on to win every election thereafter - European, local government, subsequent parliamentary and finally presidential elections in 2020. This study starts from the premise that 'fanatics' as a group openly expressing anti-immigrant and homophobic views represents, in an extreme form, the attitudes of a large part of Polish society and which forms the electoral base of the right-wing populist movement. While the 'fanatics' are not a representative sample of the PiS electorate, they support them, we suggest, because they imagine the same enemy, namely Muslims and sexual minorities. Moreover, as evident from observing the 'fanatics' marching through the streets of Warsaw and Wrocław every year on November 11 (Polish Independence Day), they are a social and political actor that is growing in power.

Looking within the milieus in our study, moreover, it is evident that 'love for club' is articulated by 'fanatics' in the same breath as 'love for the homeland' and these feelings are accompanied by a defence of tradition, Polishness is thus understood as the defence against the alleged enemy which are 'culturally alien' groups. Within the national culture (understood in ethno-nationalist terms), fanatics see no place for Islam, which is viewed as a threat to the Catholic Church, nor for non-heteronormative groups, which are seen as a threat to the family.

Notwithstanding a shift towards nationalism and religious integralism under the rule of the populist Law and Justice party, public support in Poland for EU membership and European institutions remains high. According to the nationwide survey conducted every 2-3 months by the Public Opinion Research Centre, over the period 2015-2020 at least 84% of respondents approved of Poland's presence in the EU. Thus, although the European Union for most Poles remains a wealthy 'neighbour', Europeans are certainly not enemies. Candidates for such an enemy come, rather, from 'outside'. Today in the eyes of many ethnic Poles, the enemies are 'refugees', Arabs and followers of Islam. In this report, we identify an additional group - the LGBT community – who are also included routinely among this 'catalogue' of 'internal enemies'.

Clearly, the political utilisation of football is not limited to the history of non-democratic politics. Numerous contemporary mainstream political leaders have sought to associate themselves with the game and the association has served their popularity; Polish ex-prime minister Donald Tusk, who is an active football player and Hungarian president Viktor Orban being two well-known examples from the region of

East-Central Europe in the recent decade. It has become inconceivable to imagine an important international football game without the attendance of high-level figures wearing football fan scarves or other accessories of fan culture and in various other ways expressing their 'support' for the players.

The political use of football is not confined to mainstream leaders and movements. On the contrary, extremist groups - especially those of a far-right persuasion - have long attempted to infiltrate fan culture, promote their messages and recruit new members. The National Front and the British Movement in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s employed tactics of leafleting and initiating chants, not dissimilar to the way Polish radical right groups have acted in numerous stadiums in the 2000s and 2010s.

At the same time, while the economic and political mainstream has been strongly involved in the game, fan culture has often grown increasingly alienated and oppositional. The radical subculture functioning in the context of football was imported to Eastern Europe from the West (especially, but not exclusively, from Great Britain) in the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Over the years it has also gained a regional specificity. While the extreme expressions of the subculture, including hooligan violence during and around games, in many Western countries did not disappear entirely, they generally became rare in the West as football culture in general has evolved since the 1980s. As a space, stadiums underwent gentrification, ticket prices increased, and some of the most active hooligans were subject to a stadium ban or police repression. The rules of FIFA, UEFA and national leagues, which are strict in terms of the presence of violence in the stands and the symbolism of RWE, also had an impact. As a result, in the case of the biggest football clubs, it can be said that the violence in the stands has practically disappeared, as has the racist symbolism and xenophobic chants. A different process occurred in the countries of Eastern Europe where the RWE dominated the stadiums in the 1990s and - for a variety of reasons - has remained strong ever since. Therefore, the atmosphere of an average league match in Eastern Europe can often be different from the West; instances of violence and xenophobic behaviour, for example, are more likely to occur in the stadiums of Eastern rather than Western Europe. In Poland much debate took place about the need to change the socially negative aspects of fan culture before the Euro 2012 championships co-hosted by the country (*RESPECT Diversity - Football Unites*, 2012). Arguably, however, the changes were only temporary and Polish fan culture retained its violent edge, which includes significant strands related to xenophobia. Thus, the group identity constructed through the rituals of the football fan subculture in Poland tends to be a narrower, exclusivist community, emphasising the boundaries of gender, race and ethnicity.

2.3 Infiltration

The Polish nationalist and neo-fascist groups that have most consistently sought support from among football fanatics are the National-Radical Camp (Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny, ONR) and the All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska, MW). Both of these groups take their inspiration (and their names) from radical-nationalist groups, which existed in Poland in the 1920s and 1930s. Together, they organise a large annual event, the Independence Day March in Warsaw (on 11 November), in which thousands of Polish football fans take part and which has become a major ritual expression of radical-nationalist political ideology by fans of different Polish clubs. The ONR and MW are political organisations with ambitious goals amounting to a radical reconstruction of society and a rejection of the democratic system. In line with their traditions, they seek to construct an ethno-state where liberal values are shunned and minorities are excluded through the slogan *'Poland for the Polish'*. Both groups have frequently utilised radical youth subcultures such as skinheads as a strategy to promote their ideological messages and recruit members. Although often extreme in their position, the ONR and MW do not appear socially isolated. On the contrary, they seem to have numerous opportunities for access and interactions with the social mainstream, including through institutions such as the Catholic church (Pankowski, 2010).

More extremist groups, or their representatives, also operate in the fan community, and often even play a central role in it. One such group is the National Rebirth of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski, NOP) - a national-radical and nationalist political party, belonging to the international neo-fascist movement of the Third Position. The NOP leader is Adam Gmurczyk and its official publication is the 'Szczerbiec' magazine. The group rejects both capitalism and socialism, proclaiming anti-Semitism, distributism and corporatism as well as Catholic religious integralism. Ideologically, they reference the political thought of the Walloon Nazi collaborator Leon Degrelle, leader of pre-war Romanian fascists Corneliu Codreanu Zelea and Benito Mussolini. The NOP has existed since the early 1980s and has committed numerous acts of violence in Poland, from planning terrorist attacks to attacks on ethnic, sexual, and religious minorities or political opponents or lectures at the university (for example, an attempt to block a lecture by Zygmunt Bauman). Despite numerous accusations against the party and several convictions of its members and activists, the organisation has not been banned and operates without restrictions (Witkowski, 2019).

The NOP has regularly organised numerous demonstrations in Wrocław during the last decade. For example, a city tram was rented and it was driven around Wrocław in carriages decorated with a large Celtic cross, the slogan 'White Power' and an advertisement for the xenophobic portal Fuckpc.com (short for 'fuck political correctness'), from time to time shouting loudly 'once with a sickle, sometimes with a hammer, hit the red mob '. The group organised a walk to one of the islands on the Odra River (in Wroclaw), where a puppet depicting the Jewish historian Prof. Jan Tomasz Gross was thrown into the water. Nationalists also demonstrated in honour of the anticommunist partisans from the National Armed Forces (NSZ), commemorating the anniversary of the creation of the pre-war ONR, the attack of the Third Reich on Poland, the anniversary of Martial Law, or the anniversary of the date of occupation of eastern Poland by the USSR in 1939. They demanded 'the final solution to the problem of Gypsy nomads' in Wrocław and called Wrocław 'the City of Nationalism'. The flagship activity of Wrocław nationalists has been the celebration of November 11, which was competing with Warsaw Independence March, organised in Wrocław by NOP, under the name of 'March of Patriots'. All these events have been attended by numerous representation of fans of the Wrocław sports club WKS Śląsk Wrocław (Witkowski, 2018) and teams whose fanatics were allied with WKS fanatics (for example, Motor Lublin, Lechia Gdańsk, Wisła Kraków – all of which are dominated by RWE fanatics).

Gaining the support of Roman Zieliński, the leader of the stadium hooligans Śląsk Wrocław, turned out to be of key importance for the nationalists from NOP. This fanatic leader experienced a 'national awakening', which he described in his book *How I fell in love with Adolf Hitler* and declared himself to be a passionate nationalist, anti-Semite and anti-communist. Thanks to this cooperation, fans appeared en masse at extreme-right demonstrations and xenophobic slogans were raised at the city stadium, flags depicting hammers and sickles crossed (as a sign of rejection) and or jeered at players with a skin color other than white. On the stands there were banners with the words 'Skinheads' and a visible Celtic cross or a 10-meter banner with the slogan 'White Power' and other nationalist symbols such as the 'wolfsangel' or 'phalanx'. The now defunct website wroclawia.info, formerly one of the most famous and largest websites associated with fans of the Wrocław club, distributed dozens of sticker designs, some of which contained racist and anti-Semitic inscriptions and drawings such as: the figure of Hitler with a Roman salute against the background of the Silesian flag; the slogans 'Skinheads Hooligans 88' or the figures of three men in boots kicking a black man and the caption, 'This is how the nobility from Wrocław enjoys itself'. The activists of the National Rebirth of Poland handed out nationalist leaflets to fans, urged them to visit far-right websites - nacjonalista.pl, Wrocław.info, nop.org.pl - and recruited new supporters at the stadium (Witkowski, 2018).

Another RWE group, this time international, active among Polish fanatics is Blood and Honour. It is a Nazi 'international' with a loose structure, analogous to ISIS and al Qaeda. It describes itself as 'a worldwide

pan-Aryan organisation dedicated to the struggle for the survival and prosperity of the White Race'. Its name comes from the motto ('*Blut und Ehre'*) of the Hitler Youth. They preach 'white nationalism', 'white supremacy' and 'white separatism', i.e. Nazism, racism and apartheid, respectively. This is an internationalist group. What matters to them is not nationality, but 'race'. They believe that 'whites' should retain the majority in Europe and the US, and dominate politically, economically and culturally. In their opinion, immigration of 'coloured' people and low birth rates threaten the 'white race'. They are accelerationists and insurrectionists. They consider themselves a pan-Aryan white resistance movement against the oppressive forces of the 'Zionist Occupation Governments' (ZOG). For they maintain that the governments of Western countries are pawns in an international conspiracy led by Jews. They preach a nationalist revolution and praise violence. Different national Blood and Honour units use different symbols, but common elements include the Gothic font, the colours of the Third Reich flag (black, white and red) and Nazi symbolism, including the Totenkopf (skull and crossbones, symbol of the 3rd SS Panzer Division Totenkopf – concentration camp guards) or triskelion (Forbes and Stampton, 2015). Groups and activists associated with Blood and Honour are visible in many groups of football fans in Poland, and in several of them they even have key functions. The leader of Lechia Gdańsk fanatics is Grzegorz H. aka 'Śledziu' ('Herring'). Grzegorz H is a Nazi; he has five swastikas tattooed on his body, the motto of the SS and a huge Celtic cross on his back. He is closely connected with the criminal world including the well-known Gdańsk gangster,and former nazi-skinhead Olgierd L. Both have served time in prison and both are regular guests at Blood and Honour sports events and concerts in Poland.

From 2005 to 2009 in the largest city of north-eastern Poland, Bialystok, there was regular violent conflict between RWE and the so-called 'praetorians', i.e. the politically non-radicalised fanatical Jagiellonia Białystok football club fans. The former wanted to take control of the fanatics section of the stadium at all costs. In December 2005, Adrian R., the head of the Praetorians, was killed in front of his home. During this period, RWE took control of the stadium of the Jagiellonia Białystok. From there, they created a criminal organisation headed by Adam S. aka. 'Staszyn', Herbert Ż. aka. 'Herbciak', Krzysztof G. aka. 'Litwin' and Tomasz P. aka. 'Dragon'. In 2013, the Central Investigation Bureau of the Polish Police managed to introduce two undercover policemen to the management of Białystok RWE involved in the football fans' movement. In summer 2014, the first arrests were made. 'Dragon' and 'Staszyn' were charged by the prosecutor's office with the management of an organized criminal group dealing in drugs and benefiting from prostitution. 'Litwin' has been charged with inciting racial hatred. The case file shows that the RWE from Białystok had established a complex criminal organisation closely connected with the football fans' movement in Białystok. They were involved in pimping and drug trafficking. For the latter, they needed a stadium. It was there that they recruited young people who entered the organisation. Such new recruits would first be assigned to painting swastikas, before being promoted to the so-called ultras first dealt with painting swastikas, and when he was good, he went to the so-called ultras, i.e. the leading group at the Jagiellonia stadium. Above them were hooligans, i.e. militias taking part in hooligans' matches. It was managed by the board of directors controlled by RWE connected with Blood and Honour (Kowalewski, 2014). During the brutal Pride pogrom in Białystok in 2019, one of the leaders attacking LGBT demonstrators was the aforementioned Tomasz P. 'Dragon' and his followers from the group of Jagiellonia Białystok fanatics.

Another participant of the Polish network Blood and Honor, Krzysztof F. aka 'Fornal' has played an important role in the community of fanatical football fans of the Odra Opole team since the nineties. He is also leader of the local Opole community of nazi-skinheads. 'Fornal' also visits London and regularly attends Chelsea matches and is a supporter of the Headhunters group, which brings together neo-Nazi fans of this club. Fornal's son, Patryk F. is an active RWE who, at the age of 16, committed a racially-motivated physical attack on a black footballer of Odra Opole (Seeb, 2008). Both father and son are regular guests of the Blood and Honour events in Poland. Active participants of the Blood and Honour network

can also be found among the leaders of fanatics (or at least important figures in the stadium environment) in the case of such Polish football clubs as Piast Gliwice, GKS Katowice, Stilon Gorzów and Motor Lublin.

Other groups of RWE also penetrate groups of fanatical football fans. One of the founders of ONR, Patryk Litwiniak, is the press spokesman of the Wieczny Raków association, the fan organisation of the Raków Częstochowa football club. The popular football zine addressed to the fans of Legia Warszawa, 'Droga Legionisty', is edited by a neo-fascist, journalist of the fascist magazine 'Szturm', using the pseudonym 'Łukasz Grower'. The fan groups 'White Legion' and 'Teddy Boys 95' of this football club are dominated by active RWE and the largest producer of football fan gadgets in Poland, and for many years the leader of ŁKS fanatics, Tomasz S., is a neo-Nazi.

An important hub for RWE's communication with fanatics is the 'To my *kibice*' magazine published in Bełchatów, which describes fights among supporters, stadium sets and banners. It has a special annual insert on the occasion of the largest nationalist demonstration in Poland (and probably throughout Europe), the Independence March, which takes place every November on Polish Independence Day.

International contacts are an important element in penetrating the fan milieu of RWE activists. It is worth listing the foreign groups of RWE fans with whom Polish clubs have alliances. Fanatics of the Ruch Chorzów football club have regular contact with Frente Atletico - a group of neo-Nazi Atletico Madrid fans, having the SS Totenkopf symbol in the logo, closely related to the Spanish branch of Blood and Honor, as well as with other groups of RWE fans - Ligallo Fondo Norte supporting Real Zaragoza. Wisła Kraków fanatics, the Wisła Sharks group, in turn, has a close alliance with the neo-Nazi SS Lazio fans. Fanatics from Krakow take part in the fights along with Lazio fans and you can find photos of them carrying Nazi greetings. Other important international alliances of fanatics of Polish clubs that facilitate contacts with foreign RWE are alliances of fans of the following football clubs: Legia Warszawa - Den Haag, GKS Katowice - Banik Ostrava, WSK Slask - SFC Opava, Góral Żywiec - MSK Zilina, Orlęta Radzyń Podlaski - Dinamo Briest, Hutnik Krakow - 1.FC Magdeburg, Odra Opole - FC Sopron.

The effect of such alliances with, or infiltration of, the football fan community by RWE is often visible at the stadium in the form of the content of 'spectacles' organised in the stands by fans or the banners they bring to the stadium, as well as the participation of fans in RWE demonstrations and their other public activities (see Section 2.4).

2.4 Outcome of infiltration

Given the tragic history of Poland under the Nazi occupation during World War II, it may appear surprising that openly neo-Nazi references have become an element of the performative repertoire of football fans in the country. Some of the most graphic examples include displays of Nazi swastika banners by fans of Legia Warsaw (Ostałowska and Podolska, 2000). In October 2002, Legia fans displayed a large banner with the infamous slogan '*Arbeit Macht Frei*' (which adorned the gates to Nazi concentration camps including Auschwitz) during a game against Widzew Łódź (a club mocked as 'Jewish' by its rivals). It was accompanied by anti-Semitic chants and songs with references to Nazism and gas chambers. The club was subsequently fined by the PZPN, a historic first (and rare) case of punishment of a Polish club for its fans' racist and anti-Semitic behaviour (Jk, jar, no date). Other documented direct references to the imagery of the Nazi Third Reich include the notorious display of a portrait of Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess in the stadium of Lechia Gdańsk, another large Polish club where the fanatics are directed by active right-wing extremists and right-wing extremist symbols are visible at the stadium.

The use of Nazi symbolism partly mimicked the antics of Western European hooligan groups such as the notorious Chelsea Headhunters, influenced by neo-Nazi Combat 18 (Lowles, 2014). Partly, it resulted from

a general propensity for violent and extreme behaviour that has become embedded in the fan culture since the 1980s-1990s. Indifference and ignorance on the part of football officials usually allowed the Nazi references to go unchallenged.

During the 2010s, stadium displays of the swastika generally disappeared although Nazi references, including invoking the symbolism of Auschwitz, continued. For example, on 16 March 2019, during the Fourth Division match between Okocimski KS Brzesko and Tarnovia Tarnów, local hooligans along with their guests from Unia Tarnów, chanted insults about the visiting team including 'Jews are burning' and 'Barrack six, Zyklon B, F..ck Tarnovia'. They also chanted the latter slogan on their way to the stadium (Tatar, 2019).

Such blatant expressions of sympathy for the regime of Nazi Germany have never been commonplace, but they cannot be easily dismissed as isolated incidents. In fact they are the most extreme illustrations of a wider far-right cultural hegemony in East European stadiums. Much more common have been other neo-Nazi references and symbols which are less obvious to an observer not familiar with the codes of the neo-Nazi subculture. Among many examples, one can list banners bearing the symbolism of Blood & Honour. Many such banners - always in the red-white-black colours of the Third Reich and using the Gothic script - often with club names, have been displayed in football stadiums. In 2019, for example, such a banner was displayed by fans of Jagiellonia Białystok, Odra Opole and Śląsk Wrocław (Tatar, 2019). In all three cities, participants of the Blood & Honour network were leading fanatical fans during this period. On 6 September 2019, a similar banner was unfurled during a game of the Polish national team against Slovenia (Wawrzynowski, 2019). The Celtic cross, adopted as an international racist symbol of 'White Power' has often been displayed on banners and flags bearing direct resemblance in their design to the Third Reich flag (with only the swastika replaced by the 'Celtic cross' sign), e.g. by Lechia Gdańsk fans during their semi-final Poland Cup match against Raków Częstochowa on 10 April 2019 (Tatar, 2019; Kornak and Klymenko, 2011). This is another club where fanatics are directed by active right-wing extremists and the symbols of right-wing extremism are visible at the stadium.

Another example of such clear Nazi symbolism (although not always recognised as such) is the Totenkopf (death's head) image, historically worn by the SS concentration camp guards. Since the early 1990s, the Totenkopf - a particular version of the skull and crossbones - has become the symbol of Combat 18, another neo-Nazi organisation (Lowles, 2014). Such symbols have been frequently visible on banners in Polish stadiums. For example, fans of Arka Gdynia have displayed such a banner for several years including in 2019, in the same year that fans of two other clubs Widzew Łódź and Ruch Chorzów were spotted displaying it during their games (Tatar, 2019). Less openly provocative than the swastika, these symbols are nevertheless rooted in the historical tradition of the Nazi movement. In any case, the 'Roman salute', also known as '*Sieg-heil*' gesture has not disappeared entirely from football matches. At some clubs such as Wisła Kraków and Gryf Słupsk, fans have also displayed the flag of the Confederacy from the time of the US Civil War, which, in the contemporary European football context, symbolises racist ideology (Tatar, 2019).

Another example of quasi-fascist historical references at a football game occurred in Czestochowa on 14 November 2010, during a third-division match between Raków Częstochowa and Olimpia Grudziądz. The fans displayed a banner which read '*Warszawa. Han pasado*' ('Warsaw. They have passed', in Spanish). This was a reference to the words chanted by the soldiers of General Franco during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), to mock the defeated Republican army's slogan '*No pasaran!*' ('They shall not pass!'). The

slogan related to a march in Warsaw on November 11th, Poland's independence day, which had been organised by the extreme-right National-Radical Camp (ONR)[2].

The slogan 'Our honour is fidelity', based on the Nazi SS motto '*Meine Ehre heißt Treue'*, has also appeared in football fan culture, e.g. on scarves worn by Lechia Gdańsk fans (Tatar, 2019). On 12 January 2011, the Internet portal of the 'Wprost' weekly published a photograph of an MP from the conservative Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice) party, Anna Zalewska, taken in a corridor of the Parliament, where she displayed a scarf of second-division club Górnik Wałbrzych which bore the same motto (Kornak and Klymenko, 2011). Zalewska at the time represented the Wałbrzych consitutency and went on to become the Minister of Education and later a Member of the European Parliament.

Yet another type of historical reference in stadium displays in Poland is related to 'indigenous' radical-nationalist traditions and symbols going back to the 1920s and 1930s. These symbols can also be described as 'far-right', but their enthusiasts tend to see them as separate from the German Nazi tradition. In the case of Poland, they are represented by displays of symbols of the nationalist (National-Democratic) movement such as Mieczyk Chrobrego (Chrobry's Sword, a former symbol of the Greater Poland Camp, Obóz Wielkiej Polski) or the symbols of the National-Radical Camp (Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny). An example of a large-scale display of home-grown nationalist imagery is a gigantic banner (so-called 'sector flag') with a portrait of right-wing nationalist politician Roman Dmowski (1864-1939) and his famous quote 'I'm Polish, therefore I have Polish duties' displayed by Lech Poznań fans during an away match with Zagłebie Lubin on 27 November 2009 (Kornak and Klymenko, 2011). Dmowski, who crafted modern Polish right-wing nationalism and anti-Semitism, is highly popular among some football fans who share his ideology.

Various other displays by Polish football fans with reference to historical events and figures are almost invariably focused on the history of military struggles and military figures, usually men and usually from the mid-twentieth century. In the case of Poland, the commemoration of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising is popular at football games, especially around the date of its anniversary (1 August).

In 2017 Legia Warsaw fans unveiled a highly provocative banner ahead of their Champions League clash with Kazakh club Astana to mark the anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. The banner showed a crying child with a Nazi solider holding a gun to his head and the caption: 'During the Warsaw Uprising Germans killed 160,000 people. Thousands of them were children.' The banner, which also had a Polish flag and the year 1944 in the background, was to mark the 73rd anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising, a key event in World War II. Legia supporters also held a minute's silence before kick-off. While the banner might appear to single anti-Nazi sentiment, however, in fact its message is directed at the perpetrators of the slaughter of Warsaw civilians during the Second World War, not as Nazis, but as Germans. For over a hundred years, Germany has been recognised as the main enemy of Polish nationalists and attacks on the perpetrators of the Second World War concern their ethnicity, not the ideology they professed.

An even more popular motif is the glorification of the so-called Cursed Soldiers (*Żołnierze Wyklęci*), i.e. anti-communist guerrillas active in Poland after 1945, many of them controversial figures charged with anti-Semitism and arbitrary killings. The cult of Cursed Soldiers and the concept of honoring them originated in extreme right circles in the 1990s but achieved official state recognition under the illiberal Law and Justice government, facilitated by the Institute of National Remembrance (one of the main government institutions shaping historical discourse). The cult of the Cursed Soldiers in the Polish stadiums preceded their officially celebrated glorification at the highest state level by several years. According to a

[2]National-Radical Camp (Polish: Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny, ONR) is a Polish neo-fascist political association. The group uses the international racist symbol of the Celtic cross (meaning white power) and the so-called Roman salute. Its name comes from a violently anti-Semitic far-right organisation established (and banned) in Poland in 1934.

far-right fan leader, Roman Zielinski, the first such display (fan choreography) took place at the stadium of Śląsk Wrocław on 7 May 2011 (Zieliński, 2019).

Many stadium banners have been devoted to the figure of Witold Pilecki, a hero who helped organise resistance at the Auschwitz camp and subsequently perished as a victim of Stalinist repression in 1948. From the context and the content of these displays their intention seems to be to promote a virulently anti-communist message rather than commemorate Pilecki as an anti-Nazi fighter. Moreover, the emphasis on Pilecki seems to play a role in a so-called 'hierarchy of victimhood' between Poles and Jews, where Polish wartime and post-war suffering is emphasised and the Jewish suffering omitted or played down; a common theme in Polish-Jewish controversies over recent years and decades.

Janusz Waluś, the Polish-born racist killer of the South African anti-apartheid Communist Party leader Chris Hani, is occasionally referred to as 'the last of the Cursed Soldiers' and in the late 2010s there has been a growing number of displays, which celebrate him as a hero in Polish stadiums across the country (Saintourens, 2018; Davies, 2018). Prayers for his well-being and release from jail are offered at the annual pilgrimages of Polish football fans to the Catholic shrine of Częstochowa, which is an important event in community and identity-building efforts and loaded with far-right symbolism (Davies, 2017). The cult of this character also comes from far-right circles. Waluś has been worshiped since the nineties by neo-fascist skinheads, and to this day his main defenders are the former and present right-wing extremists. Some of them - e.g. Mariusz B. or Tomasz Sz. are employed today in public institutions, the first at the Institute of National Remembrance, the second at the Museum of Independence.

In some cases, the historical references in the stadiums focus on designating enemies. For example, references to the Warsaw Uprising often contain explicitly anti-German references as in the case of Legia Warsaw during the game with Astana FC on 2 August 2017 (Kilpatrick, 2017). During the controversy over the Polish legislation (the Institute of National Memory Act) which was related to Holocaust memory debates in 2018 (Pankowski, 2018), in some stadiums banners appeared with the words 'German Death Camps'. As noted above, the reference to 'German' rather than 'Nazi' is significant.

Despite the fact that Polish RWEs often share the same hostile attitude towards Jews, liberalism or the left wing with German RWE, historical resentments and past events often mean that they are in conflict with their German counterparts. Another spectacular example of pointing to enemies was the large fan choreography at the Śląsk Wrocław stadium on 3 May 2012 including, among others, a large banner with the caption 'We know the murderers of the Polish nation', followed by a list of Jewish names of communist security service personnel (JW, 2012). The display clearly alluded to the widespread negative (anti-Semitic) stereotype of Jews as supporters of communism (known in Polish as *Żydokomuna* - Judeo-communism). Anti-Semitism remains a significant problem in both Polish and Ukrainian football as evidenced by graffiti, murals and chants. This continues despite the almost complete lack of Jews among either players or spectators of the games today; another example of so-called 'anti-Semitism without Jews'. In this context, the use of the word 'pogrom' by the official Twitter profile of the Polish Football Association in celebration of a Polish victory over a visiting Israel team in June 2019 raised eyebrows in Polish and international media (Lipiński, 2019). Drawing on widespread anti-Jewish prejudices, fans of opposing teams often use the word 'Jew' as a term of abuse. In many cases they point to a Jewish element in the history of the opposing club. Since many clubs have such elements, it provides much room for anti-Semitism. Again, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism are a very common theme in RWE, transferred here directly to the football community.

Some observers are inclined to see the anti-communist displays in Polish stadiums as a direct reaction to the decades of communist rule. Tragic events from that period are commemorated by football fans both in the stadium and in other settings. While the communist period indeed provides a (negative) point of

reference in those expressions the above assumption needs to be questioned, because few such manifestations of anti-communism took place in the stadiums throughout the 1990s. In fact, they did not become widespread until the 2010s and a vast majority of their participants have had no personal experience of living under communist rule. Thus the phenomenon belongs to the realm of a 'constructed memory' rather than 'memory' per se. At the same time, open anti-communism and, more broadly, anti-leftism, are one of the basic elements of fascist and neo-fascist ideology.

A more radical slogan with a historical genesis - also displayed in stadiums and chanted in Polish nationalist street demonstrations - is 'Death to enemies of the fatherland' ('*Śmierć wrogom ojczyzny*'), which originated as a Cursed Soldiers' motto. Today it symbolises the idea of the violent exclusion of real or imagined enemies from the national community. A large part of the Cursed Soldiers represented nationalist groups, and you can see here a clear reference to the ideological roots of the contemporary Polish extreme right.

It is important to briefly mention the spill-over effect of the community-building processes which take place within the stadium culture. The rituals, ideologies and patterns of behaviour are not limited to the confines of the stadium. On the contrary, they can be observed in numerous other public settings. The same banners and chants, with their origin in the stadium, can be witnessed, for instance, during street demonstrations taking place on historical anniversaries such as the annual Polish Independence Day march in Warsaw, 11 November (see Plate 1).

Plate 1 Polish Independence Day, 11 November 2019, Warsaw.
Banner reads 'GOD, NATION, NATIONALISM'

Photo: Agata Grzybowska / Agencja Gazeta[3]

In this way, the ideological component which was brought into the fan culture from the outside is amplified and channeled back into the broader social environment well beyond the world of football. Other RWE demonstrations, where delegations of fanatics have often appeared in club colours, were the Patriots March in Wrocław (see Plate 2), the marches on the anniversary of the introduction of martial law in Poland, the anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, the National Day of Remembrance of the 'Cursed Soldiers' and also, in Silesia, anniversaries of the Silesian uprisings against Germany.

[3] All photos are reproduced with permission.

Plate 2 Patriots March, 11 November 2020, Wrocław. Banner reads 'LIFE AND DEATH FOR THE NATION'

Photo: Tomasz Pietrzyk / Agencja Gazeta

2.5 Locating the radical football fan milieu

The research focused on the context and content of radical nationalist ideological expressions which are present in the culture of Polish football fans. The participants of the milieu live in different cities and are affiliated with a range of football clubs but they participate in a common socio-cultural space, with common reference points and patterns of behaviour.

The important factors that unify the milieu members are their interest and active participation in football fan culture with a particular focus on the issue of violence. This does not mean that all the respondents must have personally engaged in acts of violence, which of course is a topic they would not necessarily discuss completely openly with a researcher even under conditions of anonymity. Nevertheless, the milieu as a whole is to some degree engaged in violence regularly and, indeed, it may seem the group's collective identity is largely based on the eulogisation of violent confrontation with supporters of other clubs as well as other perceived enemies. The construction of the image of the enemy (including the various types of perceived enemies) was a particularly important angle during our interviews.

At the same time, it is important to recognise differences within the group of fanatical fans that are the focus of this study. First, fanatical fans must be distinguished from 'weekend fans', the so-called *Janusz*, who watch matches on TV or the net. Secondly, fanatics should not be equated with 'ultras' who focus on performance, i.e. a spectacle with the use of pyrotechnics, banners, creating imaginative settings for football matches at their own stadium and at the opponents' stadiums. Ultras are not the subject of our research in Poland, although such groups cooperate with groups of 'fanatics' and thus are of interest in the broader sense. Thus, 'fanatics' at the heart of this study are a group defined, above all, by the cult of combat. Fanatics want to 'prove themselves in combat' through fights with the police or organising skirmishes with the supporters of hostile club ('statutes'). As the further analysis will show, a factor of key importance for our study is thus the issue of violence in both its symbolic but, above all, its physical form. Moreover, particular attention is paid to the issue of the politicisation of the radical fan culture through

attempts by far-right nationalist organisations active in the milieu of radical football fans to attract football fans to their political activity outside of the stadium too.

The research is focused on football fans who call themselves '*fanatycy*' (fanatics). These fans have often by stigmatised by the mainstream media due to their violence, fights with the police or other football fans and xenophobia. For example, fans of Legia Warsaw, known as 'Teddy Boys 95', are accused of destroying stadiums, buses or railway stations. Thus the general public generally remains fearful of hooligan street fights even though the phenomenon has been largely contained due to better control in stadiums and police operations. However, of concern in this study is rather the new social anxiety associated with the potential radicalisation of these football fan groups under the slogans of the nationalist right. For a certain part of society, the term 'hooligans' has come to symbolise not just hooliganism but also political violence.

3. Field Research

The field research was based on in-depth interviews conducted among football fans in several Polish cities by the Polish DARE research team from Collegium Civitas in 2018 and 2019. The empirical material gathered also includes the researchers' notes and observations. Other materials used in the analysis include secondary literature about the political aspects of football as a social phenomenon as well as additional information and documentation on Polish football culture collected by the co-authors.

Two members of the research team were male and three were female. The gender composition of the team mattered on several levels, not least because the majority of the respondents were young men socialised in a culture influenced by macho attitudes. On the other hand, some key respondents were young women. Overall, the aspect of gender composition of the team vis a vis the significance of gender for the respondents did not create major problems for the implementation of the research plan.

3.1 Data collection

In selecting research participants, the research team sought to include fans from a range of clubs as well as with diverse backgrounds. At the same time, a particular focus was placed on Legia Warszawa fans. This was partly because of the prominence of the club - Legia has won the national championship more times than any other club in the last two decades, it is one of the richest Polish clubs and, as a team from the capital city, it is, as one of the fans from outside Warsaw put it, the team that 'everyone wants to beat'. It is also because Legia fans, and the club itself, have been repeatedly punished for excesses in the stadium, especially when it comes to international matches. Fans of Legia Warszawa willingly use far right national rhetoric and national symbols, taking advantage of the great Polish myth of the Warsaw Uprising 1944. Thus, at least two large groups of Legia Warsaw fans and one important zine are directly related to RWE. Finally, the Legia Warszawa fans' association has a long history, which shows, among other things, that it can exert pressure on the owners and management of the club and their behaviour has had serious financial consequences for the club, e.g financial penalties and the closure of the stadium in Warsaw for a match against Real Madrid due to the hooligan behaviour of Legia fans.

When describing the research participants it is important to note that it was not a homogeneous group. In addition to demographic differences (such as age and sex), respondents identified allegiances differently. Of 26 respondents, 18 identify with their clubs as 'fanatics'. The remaining 8 people, although they belong to the environment of football fans, their most important group identifications are of two types. Either they are members of the ONR (National-Radical Camp), or they are people so closely associated with the Catholic Church that they can be described as Catholic fundamentalists. .

In addition to individual interviews with respondents, one group interview was conducted in Wrocław. Observation material and interviews were also conducted during the fans' pilgrimage to Częstochowa. The full data set is shown in Table 1(below).

Table 1: Data set

	Number	Total length	Average length
Respondent memos	26	-	-
Audio interviews	17	760 mins (12h 40 mins)	54 mins
Field diary entries (total)	15	-	-

3.2 Access and researcher-respondent relations

The respondents were approached because of their involvement with radical football fan groups. The milieu is often considered extreme and therefore 'hermetic' and not easy to access for such in-depth research. This supposition was partly confirmed as in some cases it took a great deal of effort on the part of the researchers to win a degree of trust and successfully conduct the interviews (if the approach was not rejected completely, which also happened in several cases). However, the extensive size of the radical fan movement in Poland meant that access opportunities were found although, in most cases, researchers had to rely on private contacts to secure them. Usually, the researcher was recommended as an acquaintance who was trustworthy and gathering information to better describe and understand the fan environment. The researchers introduced themselves as members of an international research team.

The research is based on material collected over two years through in-depth interviews and observations. Each of the participants in the study required an individual approach, which consisted of three stages.

The first step was to identify fans who call themselves '*fanatycy*' (fanatics), or had referred to themselves as such in the recent past. Such fans are characterised by a distinct code of conduct and by commitment appropriate to this specific milieu. Most 'fanatics' attend all their team's games. Absence due to bad weather, for example, was treated as a violation of the rules of loyalty, both to other fans and to their football club. According to the code of honour of fanatics, away matches are particularly important and require effort, dedication of a substantial amount of time (at least one day) and, when fans travel to a match with a club with which they have 'scythes', ('*kosy*')[4] signifying a declared war, being a fan requires courage. The most important events in the life of fanatics are associated with organised trips, requiring the rental of buses or trains to reach the enemy's territory. Fanaticism is also characterised by wearing club colours, flags, scarves on all terrains, especially when at hostile club grounds, not only in the stadium but also in public places. Finally, the 'true supporter' has experience of fighting the police, who are the common enemy of all fans, regardless of club colours.

The second step was to get in touch with potential interlocutors. The attempt to reach them usually involved approaching them via people who are friends with fans. The first meeting with the selected football fan was aimed at obtaining his or her consent for further discussion to take place at a convenient time and in pre-selected places. For example, in the case of one of the fanatics, it was always the same park in Warsaw. Explaining the purpose of the study turned out to be crucial for agreement to discuss further. Any reference by the researcher to politics or topics such as radicalisation created a sense of

[4] *'Kosa'* in Polish refers to a traditional tool for cutting crops (literally, a scythe).

disagreement. The question 'How did you become a supporter?' or 'why fans of different clubs fight each other' opened up the possibility of an interview and a longer conversation. It was possible, with varying degrees of success, to reach topics that are generally considered 'political'. This made it difficult for the researchers to present the full information about the DARE project immediately; trust had to be built over the course of a number of preliminary stages before consent to interview could be obtained. Most of respondents only agreed to give their consent if they used a pseudonym or, in the case of ONR members the abbreviations 'ONR' (male) and ONRka (female) are used. In one case – of a Ruch Chorzów fan – a further meeting was agreed but postponed many times and, when it finally took place, the respondent withdrew in the middle of the conversation, accusing the researcher of working for the police.

The third step was to build a relationship that would last long enough to make appointments and renew contact. In the vast majority of cases it was successful and the relationship between the researcher and the interlocutor was built on the formula of interest in the fan community by unprejudiced people, i.e. sociologists working in an international project. The attraction of speaking to non-judgmental academics is explained by the fact that fans in Poland are particularly sensitive to their image as hooligans, which dominates the media.

The relationship between the researcher and the interlocutor was built in different ways in each case but had two common features. First, the relationship, while keeping the necessary emotional distance in order to conduct interviews as part of a sociological study, became closer and deeper over time. This was facilitated where researchers were able to get to know participants in natural settings such as accompanying fans on a pilgrimage. In one case, the respondent was a person who was both a supporter and a priest. Secondly, the meetings and discussions were organised such that the conversation began by eliciting biographical details such as how the respondent had become involved in football fanaticism and their family environment. Thereafter, it was possible to ask the more radicalisation-focused questions in the shared interview scenario (see Introduction to this series of reports for details).

The researcher's gender was of great importance for gaining access to the environment and establishing contact with specific fans, especially the youngest. The field research team consisted of three women and two men. Female researchers conducted conversations also in natural circumstances, i.e. during the pilgrimage to Częstochowa or during the match in the form of a group interview (Wrocław). The male researchers conducted individual interviews with fans by arranging meetings in various public places. In two cases it was a fan's private apartment. In most cases, the male researchers mainly managed to reach older fans (those over 30 years old) as younger people, especially those around the age of 20, were reluctant to talk to an older man. However, these interviews with fans over 30 years old provided valuable data because it was easier for them to talk openly about their past and about actions that were risky to discuss such as '*ustawki*', that is organised fights with rival fans in the woods. Older fans did not dissociate themselves from the use of violence, except in the case of one fan who is a priest. Nor did they condemn young fans who make trouble, as they had done in their youth. These older respondents tended to adopt the position of commentators; assuming, in a way, the role of the researcher-observer.

3.3 Ethical practice

Ethical issues are critically important when research focuses on groups at risk of discrimination or discriminating against others or putting others at risk. Our interlocutors asked that their names, and, in some cases, other personal data were not used. Thus, names used in this report are pseudonyms and, in some cases, socio-demographic data is not provided for those respondents who did not want to have it included (see Appendix 7.1).

The fans participating in the research belong to a milieu characterised by attitudes of xenophobia, hatred, homophobia and aggression towards foreigners. They are not the potential victims, but perpetrators, of violence who attack sexual, ethnic or national minorities. This required researchers to simultaneously maintain an attitude of cognitive distance but also respect for those participating, regardless of differences of opinion. The aim of the research, among others, was to identify the psychological and sociological sources of such attitudes and behaviours that are anti-social and involve physical and symbolic violence. An important ethical issue was negotiating written consent to participate in the project from respondents; this consent was obtained in line with the ethical requirements of the project. It is also important to note that the milieu of interest to us is also observed by the police; this increases distrust towards anyone from the outside especially when they ask questions that allow a description of the environment. A particularly difficult issue arises around the question of 'radicalisation', which is a stigmatising word. Thus in providing information about the project, the project's own critical approach to the notion of 'radicalisation' was indicated. During the interviews, questions relating to this element of the research were supplemented by questions around biography and football fan culture.

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis followed the DARE project procedure using NVivo software (see Introduction to this series of reports). Some nodes were added to the shared skeleton coding tree to reflect the rich material gathered on the life experiences of 'fanatics' including early exposure to physical violence and the construction of fan identity during rituals of passage some of which involve participation in violent and criminal activities.

3.5 Socio-demographic profile of the respondent set

As noted in Section 3.3, many respondents in this case study did not want to reveal personal data, in order to protect anonymity. Socio-demographic background data is thus available for only just over half the respondent set, making it unwise to present any statistical overview of the composition of the respondent set. Details of those background data collected are found in Appendix 7.1.

We can say, however, that, in terms of age profile, 16 of the respondents were 20-30 years of age and 10 were over 30 years of age. We included respondents ('fanatics') over the age of 30 in this case study to include long-standing members of the fanatics, who provided significant insight into the group practices.

Twenty of the respondents were men and six were women. This confirms that the milieu is largely male-dominated, but there were also female respondents and interviews with them provided important perspectives on, and experiences of, participation in the radical fan movement.

The socio-economic status and levels of education across the respondent set vary. The sample includes those with secondary and higher education and, contrary to the strong association of the radical fan culture with lower social classes, in this study, group identity was not based on socio-economic status or class.

The younger respondents – those around 20 years of age – were generally unmarried, while older respondents tended to be married and had one or two children.

The respondents supported football clubs from all over Poland (from the centre, the south, the east and the west of the country).

4. Key findings

In this section of the report, we outline the key findings of the study. First, we introduce illustrative cases from the respondent set of the very different trajectories encountered within the milieu. We then consider the relative role of ideological and non-ideological factors in such trajectories. In the third sub-section we explore young people's own understandings of 'radicalisation'. In the following section we look at the range of structural factors shaping radicalisation trajectories before, in the final section of findings, focusing in on the key factor in this case – that of gender.

4.1 Radicalisation and non-radicalisation trajectories: an 'extremist' and a 'moderate'

To illustrate the range of trajectories encountered in the milieu studied, we present here in depth two individual cases. The stories of Mirra and Adam present, on the one hand, the diversity of views and practices within the milieu. They might also be taken as providing 'ideal types' of fans who are 'radicalised', on the one hand, and who remain 'moderate' on the other.

4.1.1 'Fighting [...] for Poland to be a Polish country': Mirra's trajectory

Mirra, a young woman from Eastern Poland, was introduced to the world of football fans through her boyfriend, an active radical fan of Cracovia. The club has a long tradition and is known in the media for sometimes particularly high levels of violence in the fan culture, including against their local city rivals at Wisła. Mirra declares that participation in the group of Cracovia hooligans (the term 'hooligan' is her own choice of words) gives her a sense of belonging and purpose since she moved to Kraków:

> Well, you know, football hooligans and so on, and I kind of got in with this crowd too, it's kind of close to me, we sometimes go to Cracovia matches, so that's generally how we spend our time too. I'm someone who doesn't come from Cracow, so for starters, I have a person here, or people, that I can simply spend time with, I can just go grab a beer with them, I can go to a game with them, spend some of my free time and I don't have this emptiness in my life. They take a lot of my time, in truth. It's them, ever since I moved into Cracow, that have been **the biggest part of my life** [emphasis added]. (Mirra)

Mirra declared herself as initially apolitical and not too interested in subjects such as national history or political events, although she has her own point of view: 'Maybe I don't know a lot, I'm not really into history, I don't know what it looks like from the political point of view, but yeah, I have my own observations' (Mirra). However, she admits that her political outlook has been influenced by her participation in the fan group and declares her strongly patriotic standpoint in very general terms.

> Somehow, because of the people I'm around, there are these topics and also what is going on in Poland right now, it's like, it's about everything, I guess every real Pole should just care about what's happening in their country, about the fact that the situation is what it is. (Mirra)

The term 'real Pole' ('*prawdziwy Polak*') has a particular connotation denoting a strongly exclusivist understanding of Polish identity, based on an ethno-nationalist principle, and excluding those Polish citizens who are allegedly not 'truly Polish', e.g. supposed closet Jews hiding their family roots in the post-Holocaust period (Pankowski, 2010: 58). It is possible, however, that Mirra is not aware of the highly controversial origin of the phrase.

Later in the interview, Mirra expresses a view on Polish identity which might be described as primordialist, declaring a preference for a fixed and stable model of national identity. 'Poland', she says, 'should also be

this country in which there live... Well, there's some nationality, that's why countries where created, to be inhabited by people who come from them' (Mirra). The term 'nationality' ('*narodowość*') in Polish is closer in its meaning to ethnicity than citizenship. Therefore, the respondent seemed to agree with a vision of a mono-ethnic country. She also expressed an opposition to immigration, which she perceives as imposed on Poland by the European Union.

> It seems very complicated to me, because we're in this European Union, which opened our borders, and all the people, from every country, practically, from Europe, can just come to us. And also Poland is forced by the European Union to welcome immigrants, which I don't necessarily like. (Mirra)

Although Mirra is cautious in the expression of her views, her preference for the current, relatively low, level of social and ethnic diversity in Poland is evident: 'I mean, I also think that Poland is, when I compare it to European countries, after all, there are fewer of these immigrants' (Mirra). She also notes the recent tendency of increased labour migration from neighbouring Ukraine:

> Somehow, lately a lot of Ukrainians have been coming to us, and actually, history kind of shows us that they're our good friends, but somehow they always made it harder for us and, well, generally they butt in too much into everything that's going on and that's what I don't like. [...]Ukrainians, there are definitely too many of them or, let alone the fact that when I go home to the countryside there are plenty of them, but in Krakow I have a feeling that there are more Ukrainians than Poles. (Mirra)

In the context of the influx of Ukrainian migrants, Mirra emphasised in particular the aspect of competition on the labour market:

> […] they come and they kind of take our jobs. People who come to Cracow to study here, it's like, it's harder for them to get a job here. It was, for example, for me, it's also harder because, well, everybody knows that people who come from Ukraine don't have such expectations and also because of the fact that earnings fall as well, which affects me a lot. (Mirra)

The cultural aspect was also important for her. She explicitly expressed concern about the changes in customs and social norms that, in her opinion, immigration to Poland brought:

> First of all, I don't feel at ease, because someone is constantly giving me dirty looks, they destroy our history, it's also kind of visible that they have some big problem with us, and they enter our country and tell us how we should live and say what we can and can't do. And to show them that's not the case... That Poland is not Ukraine or that Poland isn't some Arab country at all, well, then we do show them our independence, that we're a very strong nation, which was after all shown by our history too, more than once, that we fight for, very strongly fight for our own interests and, in general, well, they just meddle too much. (Mirra)

The above quoted passage once again shows some views which may be interpreted as incoherent. Starting from a declaration of traditional friendship with Ukrainians, Mirra complains about their large number in Poland and briefly invokes the argument of economic competition on the labour market, before turning to symbolic issues of national sovereignty, history and pride. Somewhat surprisingly, she brought in an anti-Arab reference which might be interpreted as a sign of a generalised hostility against 'the other' defined in ethno-national terms.

Mirra continued with the thread of Arab immigration:

> Generally, I won't mention Arabs, who come here and pose a great threat to our lives (sic). In general, what's happening in the world now, it's mind-boggling. And that's why countries

> should be like that, that people are one big family in them, they're together, they all play towards the same goal, instead of someone coming and fucking up our whole situation, right? (Mirra)

Although it was not spelt out clearly, it might seem her words suggest she connects Arab immigrants with the threat of terrorism. Although the number of Arab and Muslim migrants in Poland is very low compared to other European countries - and no terrorist threat has materialised in recent years - events in Western Europe have had an impact on the perception of diversity and migration in Poland through their presence in the media and political discourses. It can be noted also that Mirra subscribes to an idealised vision of a harmonious national community ('that's why countries should be like that, that people are one big family in them, they're together, they all play towards the same goal'), which further suggests an anti-pluralist ideal of society.

Later in the conversation, Mirra discussed racial diversity more directly, expressing her fear about 'living in a world in which we're very much mixed racially' and the sense of security that the relative ethnic homogeneity of Polish society lent: 'The fact that we're Poles somewhere deep, very deep, gives us this feeling of safety' (Mirra). Mirra attributed inter-ethnic violence, and even far-right terrorism, to the phenomenon of diversity, arguing that if people shared 'one idea' and did not 'differ in religion' then there would be less violence and those such as Breivik 'wouldn't have resorted to such solutions' (Mirra).

She acknowledged her views on opposition to diversity were influenced by the views of her friends in the fan group as well as by media representations of global events – especially videos and articles posted on the Internet. Her conclusion is that local threats are being caused by global issues – or problems in other countries – that then get played out in Poland. As she puts it:

> ISIS and so on is some crazy shit for me, because it's simply like that, they fuck things over in a country, make a mess there, people are afraid to go out, so that's why these people should sit in their own country and if they have some problems, well, they should solve them at their own place, not run rampant around the world, so that people are afraid to, I don't know, to get on the tube. (Mirra)

Mirra applies her opposition to ethnic diversity also to the field of religion.

> I'm not for diversity. For one, there is race, then there is religion, and views as well. It's like every country has some history of its own, some values it grows from and if we try to mix it up, just like that, people will fight with each other. Each religion fights for its interests, for its views and that these views are the most worthy and that I don't have to listen to anybody else. So, if we start mixing it up, then it'll just be like it is now, and people will be afraid of expressing their opinions. Because they don't even know if the person who is, who is listening to them, will agree with these opinions, or maybe I'll be stabbed in the back, because I'm for this or that, for this religion or other. (Mirra)

The respondent declared the political sympathy of her group of friends, football fans, were with so-called 'national parties': 'I mean, well, what's close to us are these rather national parties. Because they strongly support these ideas of ours. They're fighting for no such divisions, for Poland to be a Polish country' (Mirra). In the political discourse of the Polish right-wing the adjective 'national' ('*narodowy*') applied to political groupings usually signifies far-right nationalist organisations. Although her declaration of political identification was initially cautious, she later became more specific when discussing concrete political groups and her apparent disillusionment with the current right-wing ruling party Law and Justice and her contact with the markedly more radical nationalist group, the All-Polish Youth:

> I used to strongly support PiS [the Law and Justice party], because I thought that it's a national party. But lately it turned out that we're opening up to a Jewish country and looking as if from their perspective, because we cooperate with the United States. It shows that these are not quite our life ideas. And there was this party, I mean it wasn't a party, rather a youth wing, the All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska). At high school, well, I was once at this gathering of the All-Polish Youth and, well, it's generally cool that they strongly fight for the Polish identity, for our country to be Polish, for people here to support specific values. Because after all, that doesn't divide the society, it's this circle of people who strongly supports the Polish identity, and that's what's particularly important to me. (Mirra)

Notably, at this moment in the conversation an element of anti-Semitic discourse appeared, too. This is, perhaps, no coincidence since the All-Polish Youth movement she mentions in this context has a tradition of anti-Semitism going back to the 1920s and 1930s.

Mirra overall considers violence a normal part of life, including fighting for certain goals or values:

> If someone really believes in where he or she is, who he or she socializes with, and wants to fight for his or her ideas, then sometimes there's violence in all that, not just the physical sort, really. It's not just about beating someone up, but also about this violence, this very mental violence, that you have to strongly make your point, the other side doesn't necessarily need to like that. (Mirra)

Despite Mirra's authoritarian vision of a national community she is not happy with the presence of the police in the citizens' life: 'Well, taking into account how policemen treat us, how we as citizens are buggered about by a policeman who is more interested in giving us a fine than in actually helping us, then I think that I just see policemen as, well, as an unnecessary part of our country' (Mirra).

Although Mirra's views are not completely at odds with those which are currently present in mainstream society, she feels they may have alienated some of her former friends and she prefers to socialize with those who agree with her:

> Some of them for sure, some of my friends, knowing about my views, somehow turned away from me, because they don't share these views. But there are those who know, and I socialize with such people who somehow share my views. And it's also important to me, that I can share that with my friends, that I can say to them outright what I think about that, because I know that they think the same. [...]I guess at the end of high school and at the university, that I somehow saw, when I moved out of the country [locality], I saw that you can really have such friends who share your views. First of all, I also spend time with them, because I know that they are there for me and that they have the same opinions as me. (Mirra)

Mirra's trajectory seems to follow a relatively simple path of radicalisation, beginning from a dysfunctional family through the violent football hooligan milieu which provided her with a strong sense of belonging, accompanied by a radical nationalist ideology provided by an extremist group such as the All-Polish Youth.

Other respondents, however, provide examples of a less straightforward trajectory and a more complex mix of values and attitudes.

4.1.2 'I really love this city, including its diversity': Adam's trajectory

Adam is a young football fan based in Wrocław (a fan of Śląsk Wrocław, a strong club in the Polish top division). He is a student in the last year of full-time studies. He did not give any further details to avoid identification. Adam has no permanent job, but sometimes works as a steward at the stadium during mass sports events, mainly football games. Like the vast majority of the population of Wrocław, his family

migrated from other parts of Poland. His grandparents came to Wrocław after the Second World War. He declares a very strong identification with the local community, but he does not reject the idea of diversity as such, even though he expresses some reservations about the practical aspects of his co-existence with migrants in Wrocław. 'I was born in Wrocław and I really love this city, including its diversity' (Adam). Asked what he means by that, he mentioned a large number of students from abroad, especially from Spain, and a lot of tourists from all over the world.

He emphasises the significance of freedom and equality. He is generally open to immigrants, but his opinion of them is determined by their level of integration with Poland (learning the language, taking up a job):

> On the streets, there are more and more Ukrainians who work and study in Poland. Most of them speak Polish. But there are also some who don't do well in our language. It's annoying, especially when a person like that works in a shop and doesn't understand you. In general, they aren't problematic. They're similar to us, they have similar views, they look and behave like us. There are also more and more students from abroad: Spain, Italy, Russia and Ukraine. Wrocław has become different, interesting. (Adam)

Adam's attitude towards another minority group, the Roma, is ambivalent. He negatively views those with whom he deals on a daily basis:

> They are visible, they walk around the Market Square and bother people. They hassle them for different reasons, usually it's their source of income. They go here and there to beg or play the accordion. For me, it's typical that very young people, or even children, run up to passers-by, put flowers in their hands and demand money in return. They set up makeshift camps. We don't know where they work, if at all. (Adam)

When the researcher asks if he would consider marrying someone from the Roma community, his response is also somewhat ambivalent: 'No... Well, if she was beautiful, smart and hard-working. It'd also be important what her family is like. Are they honest and hard-working?' (Adam).

Adam is aware of, and occasionally influenced by, stereotypes concerning specific social and national groups. At the same time, he seems open to personal contacts with representatives of such groups. For example, in discussion about the Muslim community, he declared, 'I don't mind Muslims going to mosques. I've visited the one in Wrocław. The man who showed us around was a friendly guy' (Adam). In general Adam is not free of stereotypes, but he declares a fundamental acceptance of the basic idea of social diversity. At the same time, he requires immigrants to assimilate with Polish culture, to be committed to finding a job, learn Polish etc.

When asked about specific cases of anti-minority attacks (stones thrown at a synagogue) Adam declared he disapproved of such attacks, but he signalled he would rather not put himself on the line to oppose them: 'Maybe I'd tell them to stop throwing, but I wouldn't run up there and shield it. I'd rather not be hit by those stones.' (Adam).

Adam distances himself from those groups in Polish society which express intolerance of minorities, but he expects their significance in Poland will decrease:

> Among us, there are those we call chavs, those retards standing by the shop with a beer, with shaven heads. With the message 'God, honour, homeland'. Who don't have a clue about anything. [...]There aren't more of them than there used to be. Nowadays, our environment is more varied and they can express their views. In the past, it was much more rare to meet a black person on the street. They didn't have opportunities to express their hostility towards

> others. There's probably nothing that could be done about them. The future generations will behave differently, they'll be tolerant, because they'll get accustomed to the presence of other nations. (Adam)

It seems Adam's view is optimistic and based on a positive view of society as such.

He condemns violence against minorities, but tends to play down its scale as well as its social and political significance. For example, asked about an attack against a Ukrainian-born university lecturer, he answered:

> It doesn't look too good, especially since he was a lecturer. But such cases are also demonised and people jump to conclusions on the whole society on the basis of events which aren't that significant. You can get a smack in the mouth for wearing red shoes. In a tram, it can happen for any reason, and sometimes just because someone is looking for an excuse. You're speaking Ukrainian and you get a smack in the mouth. And it's not because you're speaking Ukrainian but because someone just felt like knocking somebody's teeth out. A bad day. (Adam)

Also his response to a question about far-right terrorist violence (Breivik) seems somewhat ambiguous and defensive:

> Someone killed people he didn't know. What can one think about that?! Just like this New Zealand lately. It's stupidity, but we don't really like the reactions to it. Once again, international media are attacking whites. A black person can be proud of being black. But if I say that I'm a proud white, I'll immediately be a racist. It doesn't make sense, because skin colour is just skin colour. It's not cool that only because in the past some other people were discriminated against, now this discrimination is used in the wrong way. When you catch a thief in a shop, you want to punish him. It turns out that he's a Jew and what happens then? You become an anti-Semite. It doesn't make sense. (Adam)

Adam decries the current political polarisation of Polish society:

> The approach of people that are left from the Communist times, the conviction that there are only two sides, we are for or against. If you support PiS (Law and Justice Party), you're against Koalicja (Civic Coalition) and vice versa. If you're against somebody, you're for someone else. Everything is either right or wrong. And the fact that our politicians also absorbed this approach and, instead of coming up with some solutions, they say that they're not like those other guys. They do it wrong, we'll do it better. But in reality, it is what it is.

He shows a low level of tolerance for the polarisation of the social scene. He is aware of the impact of the previous Polish political system (socialism). He sees this impact as negative. He negatively reacts to the attempts to assign his views to any political group. His attitude towards politics and politicians is negative and he does not align himself with any political party currently. He also declares that he would 'never sacrifice myself for any cause' although adding that the exception might be 'for defending my homeland'.

Adam's understanding of racism is rather dismissive; although he condemns racism in general, he dismisses its significance as a widespread problem and does not recognise the racist nature of his own behaviour. Reflecting on what he considers to be the exaggeration of the problem of racism in football, he notes that he has been accused of being racist in the past, for example when using the colour of his skin to identify a Black guy in the street (when he did not know the guy's name). He contrasts his own behaviour which he does not see as racist at all with much more offensive language used towards Black players in the past, noting that now 'nothing like that happens' and that, in general, he does not support 'hypercorrectness' in one's views.

While Adam's enthusiasm for the club is strong, he distances himself from the violent wing of the fan movement: 'I meet my friends, go to parties. I've always been a football fan, but a normal one. I don't like rows. That's why I help organise matches. I put up advertisements. I keep order' (Adam). Similarly, and, in contrast to many other respondents, Adam does not display hostility against the police. He has an ambivalent attitude towards the police, formed by personal experiences, which he articulates as:

> A country can't function without the police. In our country, just like everywhere else, there are normal policemen and there are those who were bullied at school and now felt a little bit of power and there's no mercy. We sometimes met policemen who were cool. But there were also those who took us to a meat wagon. And then it went on, 'show us what you've got in your pockets', 'sit down', a fist in the ribs and no talking. We were knocked around. (Adam)

Adam relies on the Internet and social media as his main source of information about the world; he does not use traditional media such as newspapers or television. At the same time, he stresses the need for a critical approach to sources of news online:

> You can find everything there. I always double check the news, whether other media describe an event in the same way. I've learnt that at the university. I don't have my favourite source of information. In my opinion, every single one is biased. That's why you need to double check information. (Adam)

Clearly, Adam is not willing to declare an identification with a far-right nationalist ideology. He identifies with his club and group of friends, but does not approve of violence and hooliganism. He does not reject social diversity in principle, but has a strong tendency to play down the problems of xenophobia and discrimination. His self-declared individualistic outlook and relative lack of empathy with social minorities seems related to the individualist ethos of contemporary consumer society.

4.1.3 Placing trajectories in the wider fanatics' milieu

It seems the spectrum of trajectories, views and attitudes among other respondents on issues such as violence and political ideology (including national identity and xenophobia) can be located between the models represented above by Mirra and Adam. In the case of Mirra it meant general approval of violence as a part of the football fan lifestyle, an identification with the xenophobic ideology of radical nationalism (including homophobia) and a view of the police as an enemy. In the case of Adam, there is a declared rejection of violence in the football context, an apolitical stance on ideology, and a qualified acceptance of social diversity (while denying the issue of discrimination as a serious problem). It seems Mirra's cluster of communal values is influenced by a strong sense of belonging to a tightly defined group (a subcultural group of football fans or an ethno-national community) and a form of opposition to the values of the social mainstream and institutions such as the police, while Adam's values reflect an individualistic culture of mainstream society. Mirra's values overall seem more widespread among the Polish radical football fan milieu.

4.2 Role of community (online/offline), importance of group, social relations, non-ideological aspects of activism

Communitas is a Latin noun commonly referring either to an unstructured community in which people are equal, or to the very spirit of community. Victor Turner, who defined the anthropological usage of communitas, was interested in the interplay between what he called social 'structure' and 'antistructure'; Liminality and Communitas are both components of antistructure.

Communitas refers to an unstructured state in which all members of a community are equal, allowing them to share a common experience, usually through a rite of passage. Communitas is characteristic of people experiencing liminality together. The most familiar distinction between structure and communitas is the difference of the secular and the sacred. Every social position has a sacred element acquired during rites of passages, through the changing of positions.

Communitas is an acute point of community. It takes community to the next level and allows the whole of the community to share a common experience, life experience, usually through a rite of passage. This brings everyone onto an even playing field: even if you are higher in position, you have been lower and you know what that means.

Victor Turner distinguishes between: existential or spontaneous communitas, the transient personal experience of togetherness; normative communitas, which occurs when communitas is transformed from its existential state to being organized into a permanent social system due to the need for social control and ideological communitas, which can be applied to many utopian social models.

In his recent book 'Identity', Francis Fukuyama analyses the relationship between the human need for recognition and the sense of personal and collective dignity. Referring to Socrates in Plato's Republic, Fukuyama explains that the human soul is not divided into two parts but three. The first is the desiring part, which seeks to fulfil our most basic needs. The second is the rational part, which controls the desire with rational calculus and maximizes personal utility. Fukuyama follows Plato saying that we have also a third part of the soul, which longs for thymos and is concerned with judgments of worth. For Fukuyama, this thymotic desire is at the root of identity politics. While many of us fight over economic issues, the primary political struggles involve demands for the recognition of our dignity as members of different groups. Fukuyama points for example to the LGBT movement which is engaged in historical struggles for the recognition of the marginalized groups dignity. He argues that the focus on 'newer and more narrowly defined marginalized groups' has diverted attention away from older, larger groups, whose 'serious problems have been ignored. Another author, Axel Honneth, defines 'a struggle that subjects conduct in order to have their identity claims confirmed' (Honneth, 1995: 21) as the most important in modern society. The first form of relating is self-confidence, established and developed in relationships of friendship and love, usually in childhood. One is capable of forging an identity by receiving recognition from others. Without a special relationship with another it is not possible to become aware of one's own uniqueness, develop a positive image of one's abilities and achieve an identity. If one experiences love, an ability to love one's self and others ensues. These relationships support the expression of one's needs without fear of rejection or abandonment. If this essential ingredient of development is not available, or a negative message about self-worth is given to a child, then the outcome may damage the personality and that person may find 'expression through negative emotional reactions of shame, anger, offence or contempt' (Honneth, 1995: 257).

Our question is as follows: what happens if this essential ingredient of development, and foundation of self-confidence, is not present in early childhood? How possible is the next stage of personal development - self-respect? One hypothesis worth considering suggests that the group (football fans with older leaders) gives young men a chance to start their own personal 'struggle for recognition'. The experience of being honoured by the community for one's contribution through work leads to the third form of self-identification—self-esteem. People with high self-esteem will reciprocate a mutual acknowledgement of each other's contribution to the community. From this grow loyalty and solidarity, which in a case of 'fanatics' is limited to their own group.

The important observations made by Francis Fukuyama and Axel Honneth about identity and search for recognition lead us to a better understanding of the fanatics' opinions quoted below. Fukuyama argues

that economic distress is often perceived by individuals not as resource deprivation, but as a loss of identity. The nationalist can translate loss of relative economic position into loss of identity and status. You have always been a core member of our great nation, but foreigners, immigrants, and your own elite compatriots have been conspiring to hold you down. Your country is no longer your own, and you are not respected in your own land. Often these are almost religious experiences for fanatics, as for Kitka:

> Screams, singing together—it's like at Mass. Those people who need to go to a demonstration, go to a parade, go to Mass, go hunting in the forest, then meet over some stew and vodka probably feel the same emotions. Some group that gives you the feeling you're something more valuable, something better, and when you're young, then obviously your self-esteem is zero or you're a nobody. You go to school, everyone is getting on your case, you're having a hard time at home. And here you are accepted, almost an adult. (Kitka)

The trips, however, seem to combine Mass and Carnival, while at the same time giving a sense of power and strength, as Rob says:

> We walked around the city, singing like a choir, drunk out of our fucking minds, and colours up. Then on the train and back home. The cops were praying for us to leave already. (Rob)

The sense of strength results from the sense of unity described, for example, by Pawel:

> First of all, those who went on trips were, like, more united. Because they were together on that train and, like it not, when we got attacked, they had to fight. About a thousand people could even go by train. (Pawel)

Strong emotions that accompany such trips are an extremely strong bond for the group and an important experience for such fanatics as Panufcy:

> I became a fan. When the weekend came, I had goosebumps, butterflies in my stomach. I can't explain it, you'd have to be there, at the match. When I arrived at a Lech match, when I heard 30,000 people insulting Legia, nothing else was important. (Panufcy)

Their identity begins to be structured around stadium activity and away departures, blending into unity over time, as in the case of Piotr37:

> I was proud to have older mates. At some point, the stadium became my second home. I was always there, spent lots of time there. I was tall, athletic, I went to matches, so some people got interested in me, which wasn't good and I don't want to talk about it. The ultras impressed me, what they were doing. I knew lads who did tifos. They painted my whole room for me and it felt like a stadium. They painted my clothes, told me and others that I was crazy into it. Because I really got into that life. (Piotr37)

The women's experience was not different from those experienced by their male counterparts. Mirra has started to be fanatic following her brother and his group. At the case of Sandra the impact of her brothers was decisive to stop her love affair because her mate 'was not from us'. Even if they don't take part in fights themselves, they understand their importance and support the men who take part in them. They feel similar emotions and do not see the possibility of ending this cheering side as Mirra:

> I don't like football, but support is the most important for me. As a child, I went to matches not for the game, but for support. It wasn't about who wins. The atmosphere was important. I had a row about quarrels. Especially those with other girls. I liked to drain others in .... I felt like a lady in the district because my brother had good support and his mates as well. Nobody would jump me. I also always liked the boys. So I felt confident. I liked the trips away. To this

> day I miss it. I wouldn't like my children to fight because it is dangerous. But I would understand them if they get a taste for it, because men are drawn to fighting. (Mirra)

In some cases, relations with the club prevail even over romantic love and govern the choice of a life partner. Sandra broke off her relationship for the sake of the club she supported:

> Some time ago I met a nice boy while on vacation abroad. Well, we fell very much in love. He was from Silesia. And from another club, unfortunately. I was hoping that he would move to me and change. I know that it's so difficult and impossible to get into a different environment. And not everyone has to love Legia. The brothers argued with me and said it was a shame that a good girl was not with one of us. I also felt stupid about it. All my mates have guys from our group, so what am I doing? We parted because there was no other way. I still love him, but there was no future for us in this relationship. I can feel it myself. (Sandra)

4.3 Ideological and non-ideological factors of radicalisation and non-radicalisation

If we turn our attention toward ideology, two ideological narratives are important, and complementary, in the milieu studied: nationalism and Catholicism. Although not meeting the definition of 'fanatics' outlined in section 3.2, National-Radical Camp (ONR) activists belong to fan communities and have a close and constant cooperation with the milieu studied through their organisation of various events described as 'patriotic'. Such activists were thus included as interviewees in this study and their role is difficult to overestimate, because they provide the 'patriotic narrative' that we deal with in our study.

The National-Radical Camp (ONR) describes itself on its web page as follows:

> The National-Radical Camp is a social movement that brings together young Poles who are close to such values as God, Honour, Homeland, Family, Tradition and Friendship. We are not a political party as we are not interested in participating in oligarchic parliamentary games. Instead of inter-party scuffles and promising voters willow pears, we prefer national activism. The area of our activities is very wide. We organise patriotic demonstrations (we are a co-organiser of the Independence March, the largest demonstration of this type in post-war Poland), oppose leftist propaganda, cooperate with veterans, organize lectures, and conduct charitable activities (blood donation, donations for orphanages and people in difficult life situations) and we propagate the national idea using various methods. [...]We are the Nationalists of the 21st century, so our goal is not historicism or sentimentalism, but continuous development and work on the revival of national and Catholic values. We don't want to stand aside and complain - we want to take matters into our own hands[5].

Nationalism is not - according to an ONR fan - radicalism, when compared to fascism.

> I mean, first of all, if someone compares nationalism to fascism, then either he or she simply read a page on Wikipedia, which I also read personally and I simply did not see any more nonsense in my life, because fascism is something completely opposite to nationalism, we say nationalism for the nation and the nation, and as if the state for the nation, that everything is for the nation, and fascism says everything is for the state, the nation is for the state, we are for the state, the state is in the center. [...] Fascism and nationalism, so these are, in my opinion, antonyms. However, if someone is already shouting things like that, I stopped worrying about it, at the beginning it touched me, because every time I read

[5] ONR, Czym jest ONR? - ONR - Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny, https://www.onr.com.pl/czym-jest-onr, retrived 1.05.21

> something about our demonstration that we organised or someone quoted my words in *Gazeta Wyborcza* and for example twisted them or commented in some other way, it used to bother me, now it doesn't. (Onrka)

A part of the group interview with football fans could be quoted to illustrate how one of them, who belongs to the ONR, had tried to prevent themselves from being stigmatised as nationalist or fascist:

> INT: But tell me how do you feel when someone shouts ‘nationalist’, ‘fascist’? How do you feel?
>
> ONR: Currently it more a sense of amusement… I feel.
>
> INT: Does it hurt you?
>
> ONR: Well, it doesn't hurt me anymore, because it hurt me somewhere at the beginning, where it was hard for me to agree with it, but today I look at it in such a way that, well, if someone decides to be stupid, well, well, it's his choice, it's not my fault, so it's enough, I think, to remain silent, and if, as sometimes happens, people who have this type of attitude towards us decide to enter into some kind of interaction, some kind of conversation, sometimes they open their mind. I am not saying that they move towards some nationalist positions or anything like that, but that at least they're interested in it, well, reality isn't black and white, it's not like there are the honorable, honest, human-like liberal democrats and bad neo-Nazis, or facists there, right?

Plate 3 Patriots March, 11 November 2020, Wrocław: ‘POLAND SHOULD BE POLISH’

Photo: Tomasz Pietrzyk / Agencja Gazeta. Reproduced with permission.

In line with the ideological dynamics of radical nationalism, the radicalising rhetoric targets both internal and external enemies to the imagined national community. The phenomenon is crucial to the issue of ‘othering’, a key aspect of radicalisation. The external enemies include other nations such as Germans or

Russians, the internal minorities include minorities such as Jews or LGBT people as well as ideological opponents.

The internal enemies of fanatics are all those who threaten Polishness defined in a uniform way, which is repeated in almost all interviews. This narrative consists of three elements. First of all, the struggle for independence, strongly grounded in social consciousness, which covers three periods: lost statehood (1772-1918), when Poland was divided between three partitioners, the Nazi occupation during the Second World War (1939-1945) and the Soviet occupation, i.e. the period known as 'communism' or 'socialism' (1945-1989). Secondly, attachment to tradition, which is symbolised by the most important symbols and national holidays. Third, the Catholic religion and the church as the foundation in both a moral (traditional family) and historical sense, symbolising the survival of a nation without its own state. Therefore, if fanatics turn against non-heteronormative minorities, they defend their perceptions of all three elements of Polishness**.**

Plate 4 Football match: Lechia Gdańsk – Wisła Płock, 11 March 2019, Gdańsk. Banner reads ''LGBT SODOMITES, FAGGOTS, AND PAEDOPHILES, HANDS OFF OUR CHILDREN!'

Photo: Bartosz Banka / Agencja Gazeta.

As Michael Kimmel (2018: 15) stated '[…] these men developed a word-view that constantly shored up their own sense of masculinity through the emasculation of 'others' against whom they are fighting: feminist women, immigrants, Jews, gays – all depicted as not 'real men'. The enemy is clear and clear to them. They are primarily those who reject their visions of masculinity, gender roles and family visions that they consider natural or traditional. They mainly consider homosexuals, transgender and queer people to be such. Rob gives his religion, Catholicism, as justification:

> I was brought up in the Christian (Catholic) religion and I believe that marriage should be between a woman and a man. I'm in this kind of relationship myself. I can't imagine raising a child in a different arrangement: man/man or woman/woman, because we hurt a small child

> by corrupting his image of a family. Where there is a woman and a man, and from this relationship a small child is born, while from the other sex combinations no little baby is born. So how can you convince a small child that that's also a family, but one that doesn't bear the fruit of a family in the form of a small child—what are we telling the child then? And a small child raised by the same sex means that later it may also have same-sex orientation. (Rob)

For Pawel, they are worse than 'blacks':

> A queer … means he's wearing this and that. That would be a problem, why did a queer come to see Legia? More than a black guy. (Pawel)

At the same time, they consider LGBT people problematic and looking for trouble, and they consider their discrimination in Polish society to be a lie:

> LGBT was once a taboo subject and there was discrimination. Even discriminatory law. And then such struggle made sense. Now maybe they could make sense. Only if it was shown to people that it is not strange and unnatural, but that's paying a bit too much attention to the issue. You want to be treated like others, then behave like others. Heterosexuals don't organize such marches, but, true, they don't feel discriminated against. Now homosexuals are not discriminated against. (Adam)

Such hostile attitudes towards LGBT people are expressed by men and women alike. Mirra offers her comments:

> Homosexual marriages? No, absolutely not, because, after all, how can you have two fathers or two mothers, I can't even imagine it at all, we're... A traditional family, that's what a family is, exactly, a mother and a father, and then there can be children, and if there are two people of the same sex, well, then they're not exactly going to make children. So in my opinion that's also why these people shouldn't adopt children or get married, also because according to the Church and this tradition that we have in Poland, that I agree with, well, a family is made up of a man and a woman. (Mirra)

Also in line with the standard discourse of the Polish far-right, Mirra expressed hostility towards the legal recognition of homosexual partnerships.

> Homosexual marriages? No, absolutely not, because, after all, how can you have two fathers or two mothers, I can't even imagine it at all, we're... A traditional family, that's what a family is, exactly, a mother and a father, and then there can be children, and if there are two people of the same sex, well, then that's unreal for them to make children. So in my opinion that's also why these people shouldn't adopt children or get married, also because according to the Church and this tradition that we have in Poland, that I agree with, well, a family is made up of a man and a woman. (Mirra)

Also for them the enemies are feminists, who directly equate with lesbians and, like Violetta, vehemently condemn:

> Feminists and lesbos annoy me. Exactly! Anyway, in my opinion, it's basically the same because most feminists are lesbians. Fortunately, I do not deal with them because they don't hang out in beauty salons, they are ugly and couldn't care less. They couldn't settle in life and now they have to be feminists. Feminists don't come to matches because it's not a place for them, if they came to matches, they would probably meet some cool guys there, start to take care of themselves and stop being feminists. Homosexuals are a freak of nature and this should be treated, but they realize that apparently it can't be done very well. It'll be with you

till you die. During fights and other skirmishes, when I was a teenager, I often called these girls: 'you lesbo' (Violetta).

Plate 5 Football match: Legia Warszawa – Śląsk Wrocław, 16 March 2019, Warszawa. Banner reads 'ANYTIME AND EVERYWHERE, FAGGOTISM, PAEDOPHILIA, DEVIANCE WILL BE EXTERMINATED'

Photo: Kuba Atys / Agencja Gazeta

It has to be emphasised that the level of identification with far-right nationalist ideology among the respondents was quite diverse. Although many of them participated in different activities organised or led by the far right (such as the annual marches on Polish Independence Day), they rarely identified fully with the extremist messages. Importantly, many of the respondents shared a certain view on blatant racism: they did not endorse it, but sometimes denied it was a serious issue worthy of attention or sought to explain it through a peculiarity of Polish history or mentality. For example, Pawel first acknowledged that racism exists in Polish society (beyond football stadiums) before providing a string of explanations for it bordering on justification:

> There are far fewer of these black people in Poland than, let's say, when we go to Berlin. Warsaw is already more civilised, while a black guy in Bialystok or somewhere, well, er, there he will always be a black guy. This is our culture, our mentality. Besides, they will never assimilate with us. Arabs and so on, because this is a different world. They fit in better in Sweden. I saw a bit there. Sweden took in more immigrants than Germans, and they use them there, the Swedes are a docile nation. A million people, I don't know, or a million and a half people enter at a time, right? From a foreign culture, they are also people, but in most cases a worse kind, human discards. They take advantage of welfare systems, no, they are not educated people, they can't do anything, they don't know languages, so they find it difficult to assimilate, so they go in a different direction. In the case of Sweden it's already too late, they are already in deep shit. They are already cutting their pensions because they need money for immigrants, such a rich state, with such a developed welfare, they thought that they would simply attract employees. (Pawel)

Pawel went on to minimise the scale of racism among the supporters of his club (which has had a record of racist incidents on both national and international levels):

> I personally say that it is, this is not an issue for the fans at the stadium, it certainly is not, I can't agree with that there, because Legia has long had black players and there are also the Portuguese, and those darker ones. There has never been a manhunt in Legia cos a black guy has come, so he can't play. It's more likely when a player comes from Lech, some Kaczurowski or another, why did he come here because he once said bad things about Legia. So what are you here for now, that's stronger than skin colour and shit. I haven't even heard anyone in my area, and I've been going to this stadium for so many years, that someone said because he's a black guy. Even from a foreign team, if a black guy runs and so on, then they say, 'Oh, this black guy plays alright,' yeah? Or that he's agile as hell. (Pawel)

On a related issue of religious diversity and tolerance, similarly, Rob started by declaring: 'And as for people of a different faith, I don't mind. Everyone can believe in what they want.' However, this statement was immediately qualified by framing Islam as a threat, linked with terrorism:

> But up to the point where I'm not being forced to change my faith. As we can see, Islam is recently on everyone's lips. For what they do in the name of faith—blowing up or killing people of another faith. I don't think this is the way. (Rob)

He ended by once again reverting to a statement of tolerance:

> Everyone is a living person, professing one religion or another. This shouldn't matter in such everyday life for us all, we should focus on other things like the character of a given man, not his religion. (Rob)

At another point during the conversation, the same respondent stated,

> I think some things like, for example, Muslim women walking in burqas, chadors should be prohibited by our government, especially after recent events where people of that religion have done so much evil—killing so many people in the name of religion. That's why I can't imagine when such a person comes dressed like that to the stadium—and there are so many people around and everyone is wondering what that person will do instead of supporting their club. In addition, there are already more and more of them on our streets, and if you are somewhere in the city—you have to be careful what you say and if you talk about Islamists, because you can be convicted of insulting these people. (Rob)

He made a surprising claim invoking a Muslim threat and making a historical reference to the communist period:

> It reminds me of the martial law, where it was also forbidden to talk or criticise our government at the time. And apparently we fought for a democracy in which you can say what you think and feel. On top of that, a person who was not born in Poland begins to demand greater rights and, what hurts even more, is that he wants to impose his own. (Rob)

In contrast, Piotr37 (a slightly older football fan, 37 years old who had worked in Ireland) declared an acceptance of diversity without accompanying negative comments:

> I'm not negative towards Arabs, blacks, other Orientals. There are both good people and bad people among them, like everywhere. I worked in Ireland with people from different countries and there was no difference or misunderstanding between us. I met a lot of cool people there. (Piotr37)

Speaking about the political allegiances of Polish football fans Piotr cautiously notes a right-wing bias: 'Looking at the tifos, the involvement of fans that have a go at the Liberals, I guess they are slightly right-wing' (Piotr). Later he notes a certain rightward evolution of political attitudes and an increased presence

of national symbolism over the last decade, citing several watershed moments in the history of the fan movement such as Euro 2012, conflicts with the previous government and a more harmonious co-existence with the current ruling party.

> For 10 years, when it started with the Civic Platform operation, how they arrested fans of Legia, and others there, when Tusk was in politics. And political arrests later, before the Euro and still during the rule of PO. I noticed that there were different tifos [visual displays made by fans], different banners at matches, even the Polish Cup final was against this political option, I mean the current opposition. And now it can be seen that, one gets the impression that this ruling party is more on the side of the fans. There are no such spectacular arrests, there are no weird operations and it suits them. I cut myself off because I'm apolitical, but in general it can be seen. And this national symbolism is I don't know, 8 years. It wasn't there before. Cultivation and all that, tifos, some anchor-shaped flares. It wasn't there. It's everywhere now. I do not know if came from the Internet or something has happened, a lot in Poland, not only in Legia.' (Piotr)

In this way it was noted, correctly, the evolving political outlook of Polish football fans was influenced both by events directly related to the fan culture and to political processes taking place in the country at large.

The second important narrative is derived from Catholic circles that might be described as fundamentalist. Interaction between football fans and members of such circles are evident, for example, in their joint participation in pilgrimages; for this reason one of the researchers accompanied fans on a pilgrimage to Jasna Góra in Częstochowa.

In the case of fanatics, religion can be interpreted as a factor that legitimizes the subculture by connecting it to the social and cultural mainstream and, in some cases, constrains violence. Religious conviction which sometimes brings them away from violence, is also at the same time one of the factors bridging the radical football fan milieu and the social mainstream in Poland. Statements made by several respondents could be used to show the entwinement of (but also tensions in) the relationship between fandom and deep religious convictions.

The annual pilgrimage of football fans to Częstochowa provides a unique insight into many aspects of symbolism and rituals of the radical football fan movement in the country. The medieval site is sometimes referred to as the 'spiritual capital of Poland' or 'the Mecca of the Polish Roman Catholics' and it is loaded with both religious and national-historical significance. The centrepiece of the popular pilgrimage site visited by different professional (and other) groups is the picture of Black Madonna, God's Mother, traditionally referred to as 'the Queen of Poland'. Radical football fans from across Poland (representing different clubs) have gathered at the site once a year in mid-January since 2009.

A member of the DARE research team travelled with a group of fans to participate in the pilgrimage in 2019. On that occasion she interviewed one of the leaders of the event, a Roman Catholic priest, who identifies as a football fan himself, stating:

> I come from a family with strong football fan roots. I started to go to matches with my dad and grandad. The first matches I remember were when I was about 4 years old. Sometimes my uncles joined us. I'd dreamed of being a footballer since I was a child. I played football for many years with quite good results (in a club). I stopped before my A-levels. (Jan)

Jan mentioned his well-to-do comfortably family background:

> I come from a wealthy home. Both my parents worked. Later I was to take over, but I became a priest. This is the path I chose. I had a lot of love and a sense of security at home. (Jan)

Interestingly, in his statements about his deeply felt identification with the football fan movement, Jan freely talked about the hatred of the other (in this case, the generalized supporter of a different club) as well as the violence associated with his early years of participation in the movement. This confession-like statement included the following recollections, including personal aspects of family, love life, and the path towards priesthood, seen in parallel to the football hooligan trajectory:

> In football, they stoke this hatred for other clubs. I only beat people up because they weren't my guys, but strangers. I didn't learn it at home. Dad and grandad were against violence amongst fans. Religion was important in my home, but not number one. We went to church on Sundays and holidays, didn't eat meat on Fridays, went to confession a few times a year. When I started getting into fights with others, I stopped going to confession. My parents had no idea about it. In the final year of school, I got closer to the church. I think two things led to that. First—I was beaten up after a match. I had my head split open. I was hit with a wooden bat with a sharpened tip. I was in hospital because I needed stitches. They also sprained my arms. I saw it differently after that. I also beat others up. Second—I liked one girl who was in the parish school. I started singing in the church youth group because she sang there. I had a pretty nice voice and my face looked innocent, so they took me in. Things didn't pan out with her, but I stayed in the Church. It wasn't some big heartbreak. I basically had a crush on her. It was thanks to her I came closer to God. Well, not directly, but that was part of it. I'm grateful for that. I saw happiness in mum's eyes as I said I was going to the church, not out with my friends. At that time, I started to move away from my mates, but not from the club. I still went to matches, but I stopped fighting, graffitiing the walls. I didn't have time to go on trips. Other things consumed me. Later I went to the seminar. It was a very conscious decision. I saw myself as a fan differently. That was in the past. I am a priest-fan. (Jan)

Therefore, the respondent declared an end to violent activities, but retains an interest in football and a form of strong self-identification with the fan movement ('I am a priest-fan'). Furthermore, he expressed remorse about the violence and hatred which had influenced him in the past. He mentioned the quasi-religious (and especially Christian) idea of sacrifice as related to the full identification with a football fan group, drawing some extreme parallels:

> You can die for a cause, no doubt. You can sacrifice your earthly life for another human being like Father Maksymilian Kolbe did, or not disappoint people who trust us like Janusz Korczak, who went to a concentration camp with orphaned children he was looking after. (Jan)

Nevertheless, Jan stopped short of making an equation through the parallels and repeated his current condemnation of violence together with self-critical comments about the past (directly alluding to the Catholic ritual of confession as a way of seeking an absolution for past sins):

> There should be no such tragic situations in which people die because of club fights. There shouldn't be this hatred. I used to beat others up myself and I had to deal with this resentment of myself for what I did. Fortunately, I didn't kill anyone, but I beat people up, called them names, shouted in the stadiums (offensively), I wrote indecent things. Here I want to say… I don't remember more sins ... but that's not the point ... I can blame it on the stupidity of adolescence, but nothing will change the fact that I had this aggression towards other people. I just planned to beat people up and I did it. I didn't do it to hurt anyone, but for others to see that I was doing it. (Jan)

The quasi-religious language employed by the self-declared 'priest-fan' when discussing the intensity of the experience of belonging to the fan group (complete with the language of the confession as a form of eventual spiritual fulfilment completing the experience) might not be representative of the whole milieu,

but it is nevertheless significant as a possible exemplification of the perceived 'totality' of a radical football fan experience. This example would also seem to support the applicability of the sociological and anthropological models of religious rituals (as developed e.g. by Emile Durkheim) to the culture of football 'fanatics' (significantly, it seems a particularly attractive perspective in some recent Polish scholarship in the field of sociology of sports (e.g. Antonowicz and Wrzesiński, 2009).

According to another pilgrimage participant, Piotr37, the event represents both religious values and patriotic traditions, which are dear to him:

> I'm a Catholic, the kind that goes to church every Sunday. I also go to confession. My faith became even stronger in me as I lived in Ireland. Sometimes when I'm at a match I feel like I'm in church, that's how I feel. I go with the Fans' Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra. With my wife and son and godson. I teach them how to be good patriots, Catholics, to respect your club and country. I think it's good that I teach them. Basically no one taught me. I didn't have such an example in my family. On these trips I am very touched. I always go to confession beforehand to receive Holy Communion. We dress the car in club colours and put a small picture of Our Lady of Częstochowa on the rear window. (Piotr37)

For the same respondent, football, nation, and religion seem very strongly entwined:

> I am a Patriot with a capital P. For me, God, Honour, and Homeland are not empty words. Unfortunately, I had to leave Poland, my beloved club, and live far away for many years. Someone who is not a patriot and doesn't know what it means to love his country won't understand it. It hurt even more because I couldn't come to Poland for matches because I couldn't afford it. I felt like a traitor. I am a fan to the core. Not some football hooligan. I'm no choir boy, I had a few slips, some club riots, spontaneous brawls, but I'm not a hooligan or thug. I travelled around the country with people who think the same way I do. When I worked in Ireland, I always wore the club badge and the Polish flag, a little pin. I often pray for the good fortune of the club. When I was a young boy, I would hop off to the church before every match and pray. (Piotr37)

When defining the essence of being a football fan, he lists all the three pillars: 'A fan is the kind of man who can love his country, religion, and club more than anything' (Piotr37).

A similar observation can be made upon analysing the testimony of Kitka. He also uses the language of religion and compares the football game to the Catholic Holy Mass, while stressing the collective emotion of belonging as a crucial element of the fan experience:

> Screams, singing together—it's like at Mass. Those people who need to go to a demonstration, go to a parade, go to mass, go hunting in the forest, then meet over some stew and vodka probably feel the same emotions. Some group that gives you the feeling you're something more valuable, something better, and when you're young, then obviously your self-esteem is zero or you're a nobody. You go to school, everyone is getting on your case, you're having a hard time at home. And here you are accepted, almost an adult. Of course, you have to like football, we all liked to play football, watch football, and we were keen on it. So that's probably why it's football, not mountain-climbing or some shit like that, but this group is some kind of attraction for sure. These scarves, the colours, us on this side, them over there. (Kitka)

In contrast to the above remarks, the same fan mentioned the importance of the enemy in the football fan group identity, although claimed not to feel hatred against other clubs himself:

> An enemy. There were these trends that you shouldn't follow, or you booed some teams that were the most hated at the moment: Arka, ŁKS, or Widzew. It was due to the fact that most often in terms of the sport, a team was simply strong and during the match we tried to belittle or put them down somehow, I myself didn't have such antagonisms. I travelled a lot and met various people. I have a lot of mates from different cities, each supports a team—it wasn't a problem for me. (Kitka)

The fan considers participation in a fan group as a fulfilment of a natural human need to fit in with a group or support an ideology. 'There is a need to belong to some group. The need to identify with some ideology, or some, I don't know, the view that your mates share' (Kitka).

In some of the interviews, accounts of football-related collective violence occupied centre-stage with little or no mention of factors such as political ideology or religion. According to Rob, the violence used to be more widespread in the past and its importance weakened over the years:

> The trips were better then. There was no screwing around. We go into it right away. The brawl was hard-core, nobody pussied out. But the gang then was just right. And then we walked around the city, singing like a choir, drunk out of our fucking minds, and colours up. Then on the train and back home. The cops were praying for us to leave already. Good old squads! Stare Bródno, Grochów, Tarchomin, Ursus, and Ząbki. There aren't any crews like that no more. We hit them with our scarves, full on. The guys from Kamionek were the best. If they didn't go down, we'd pummel them left and right. (Rob)

According to Pawel —seemingly expressing a similar nostalgia for the large-scale occurrences of violence—the aggression (especially on the way to, and from, away games) had played an integrative role—such experiences were potentially dangerous and they served to strengthen the bonds of solidarity and dedication of the group's members:

> First of all, those who went on trips were, like, more united. Because they were together on that train and, like it not, when we got attacked, they had to fight. About a thousand people could even go by train. I went less often on these trips, maybe because my parents didn't let me. They were afraid that something might happen to me. (Pawel)

Jan linked the propensity for, and his direct experiences of, violence with the notion of honour as the highest value on both personal and collective levels:

> I was fighting for an important cause. It was about the club's honour. I went to all the matches in our city, to the trips. Always with my boys. If there were a handful of us on the trip, I was always there, not to fight, but to cheer them on. I painted up the walls around town. We wrote offensive things about people we didn't like. We had our turf. What we wrote had to get to them, psychologically! Sure, I thought so at the time. They wrote about us and so on. War on the walls. (Jan)

A common misconception in mainstream media accounts of the movement amounts to a stereotypical portrayal and lumping together of all its different permutations, including both violent and non-violent versions (hooligans and ultras). In numerous interviews, for example, the respondents complained about what they perceive as unfair portrayal of the movement by the media, focusing on violent activities rather than the charity work of the fan groups.

Overall, it is clear there are both ideological and non-ideological aspects of radicalisation and non-radicalisation among the radical football fans. In the case of the 'fanatics', the role of cognitive frameworks

underlying any ideology[6] seems limited, while the active practice of violence (or 'legitimate violence'), which is perfected in fights with the police and other fans, seems crucial.

In the midst of a diverse, heterogeneous society, full of conflict and dilemmas, tensions and choices, the national community is emerging as a complete remedy that attracts 'fanatical' opinions and behaviour. One may talk about a 'zoom' or 'blow-up' effect, whereby honour, courage and other qualities cultivated by football fans in the form of tribal games and rituals create fertile ground for developing national mythology. The next and final step in the post-liminal phase leads the 'fanatics' to identify with the heroic history of Poland, which makes it possible to adopt national symbolism and base individual identity upon it. That way a young man can identify himself not only as a brave Legia or other Polish football fan but as a proud Polish patriot.

The 'zoom effect' explains how Polish football fans make the transition from a *spontaneous communitas ('fanatics')* to an ideological communitas ('*patriots'*). That way they are not obliged to respect regular rules of so called 'normal society'. In this way, the non-ideological and ideological factors of radicalisation become intertwined.

The fanatics were also interviewed to collect their views on counteracting extremism and radicalisation. It was difficult for them to answer, since they believe that these phenomena are external to them and do not concern them. In their view, their radicalism cannot be compared to terrorism, fascism, neo-fascism or racism. Generally fanatics do not see this problem in Poland. One of the fans who seems relatively open minded, suggests that politicians and professionals need to be in control of addressing the problems posed by extremism or radicalism:

> How to counteract? This is a question for politicians, psychologists, sociologists and others who deal with it. This type of content is attractive to people who have some gaps in their lives, need something and hope to fulfill them. (Rob)

4.4 Young people's own understandings of 'radicalisation'

When football fans talk about themselves in relation to 'radicalism', they seek to distance themselves from a political or ideological understanding of radicalism. Piotr37, for example, says simply 'I don't think too much about it.' (Piotr37).When he does, he goes on, he associates it it mainly with 'others', as he puts it, 'some dictators, with a misunderstood religion and politics' (Piotr 37). In this sense radicalisation is a process in which external groups recruit those who are socially excluded:

> So, as far as I can see, that is, I read on when radicals mainly come from, where members of terrorist groups mainly recruit from, it follows that these are people who have a problem, who do not work at all, do not provide socially, they are as if excluded from the outside. (Michał)

However, Kacper recognises radicalism as part of the milieu, noting, 'The issue exists and we need to talk about it. We radicalise ourselves in various aspects of life. I must admit that in some respects it applies to me as well.' Rob also recognises that 'words or symbols' sometimes appear on walls (until they are removed) and, he thinks, that this is the product of young people 'who do not yet fully understand the

[6] Cognitive frameworks derived from nationalism, Marxism, fascism, religious fundamentalism and other ideologies have been used to build collective identities in which violence constitutes a prime component. Such cognitive frameworks and collective identities are also used by those who are in positions of leadership and who guide the individual through the radicalisation process as it promotes the development of solidarity, strengthens ties and creates loyalty. (Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism: 14)

meaning of the symbols and the words they write'. Thus, he concludes, 'somehow I don't feel or notice radicalism in my surroundings on a daily basis' (Rob).

At the same time, since fans see themselves often labelled as '*kibole*' (football hooligans), and, as such, stigmatized as bandits or even terrorists, they also seek to clearly distinguish themselves from terrorists. They do this by dissociating their own radical attitude from what they see as politics or ideology. Thus Thus, Sandra declares, 'For me, it is mainly terrorists who are associated with radicalism, not fan groups' while Violetta reflects that, 'You hear these words on TV every now and then, but I don't think about it much. It is mainly about terrorists. Although this is also said about Legia fans, I know.'

When talking about their own radicalism, in contrast, the fans associate it with being 'a fanatic' – as Robert puts it, 'I am a fanatic, so-called, but with a clear conscience.' Such fanaticism can be associated with the ultimate sacrifice and might be 'radical' but such faith can be positive:

> For me, a radical is someone who zealously observe his faith and is able to do everything for it, for that faith. (..) That is, a person is able to sacrifice the most valuable thing in his life, i.e. his life, right? For that idea. (Wacek)

When reflecting on the radicalisation process, respondents felt that those who have authority over young people can convey radical messages to them:

> It can happen in the family, absolutely. But not only because this radical content can be conveyed by someone whom those people trust. Who is a great authority for those people. It can be a stadium, mosque, church, any place where there are some people and they want to hear radical messages. (Rob)

For others, it is seen as the duty of those who have such authority to protect the young from such radicalism:

> I try to have as little radicalism as possible in my life and in the lives of people for whom I feel co-responsible. I teach this to the children and the young people I work with. It's harder with the adults. Sometimes they are so full of hatred for other people, for another nation, culture, for another club that not much can be done. They don't look at the person as a human being. They follow stereotypes. They don't reflect on it. (Jan)

Thus, for respondents, radicalism can be found in many places and institutions. As Jan explains, it can be encountered anywhere – from stadiums to the police, politics and the church:

> For me, it [radicalism] is associated with craziness, fanaticism, frustration, violence. Something bad because you can't control what you're doing. It doesn't matter in which of the aspects of life. It can be everywhere - and in stadiums, in politics, in morality. It happens in the Church as well. Today radicalism is suspicious in advance. The same applies to a priest who calls for a radical attitude. Because it is not known what will happen next… (Jan)

4.5 Structural factors

In seeking to understand the radicalisation process among nationalist-oriented fan groups, two models are generally employed. The first might be considered 'structural' in that it looks for the causes of radicalisation of different groups in the social structure, taking into account social inequalities. The second, is 'ideological' in that it focuses on mobilisation leading to radicalisation through ideology. Our study suggests that neither of these models are sufficient to understand and describe the trajectories to radicalisation of 'fanatics'.

Direct references to social inequality or injustice were generally conspicuous by their absence in the respondents' statements. They did not seem concerned with values such as equality and social justice and none of the respondents referred to 'class' as an element of their self-identification or as an important point of reference in their views on society. For example, Jan talked about his own background as being wealthy, but he did not reflect on inequality. This may be explained by the social composition of the milieu studied. While football fan groups consist of representatives of various social groups, in the milieu studied here, mostly they had middle class backgrounds although some research participants were working class. This absence of concerns about social origin and inequality supports the argument we make in this report as a whole about the importance, in this case, of identity especially men's identity, in the radicalisation of football fans.

Notwithstanding the absence of direct reference to social inequality, indirect reference to structural factors in the formation and radicalisation of the milieu can be found in the respondents' narratives on two related issues. The first concerns numerous references to the housing estate as an important breeding ground for the milieu. Thus, Robert referred to the role of the housing estate as a focus of group identification and went on to mention the issue of unemployment in his home city:

> Even when I moved back to Kielce six months ago, it was for a short time, four housing estates joined forces, there were over 200 people and they made me a banner '*Robert* welcome home'. I won't go back to Kielce, because life is very hard there. There's no work. (Robert)

The second related issue is found in the frequent expressions of hostility to the police as an institution representing the state and the social order. Mirra describes how she had 'fled the police a few times' and been caught once by them (when she was just 15 years old) and 'thrown in the tank'. She concludes that the police are 'more interested in giving us a fine than in actually helping us' and that they constitute 'an unnecessary part of our country' (Mirra). This feeling of suspicion and hostility was brought home to the researchers when an interview with Patryk, a 22 year old supporter of the Ruch Chorzów football club, was interrupted when he became suspicious that the researcher was working for the police.

Arguably, these indirect references to structural factors illustrate the generalised position of the radical fan milieu as related to the 'bottom' rather than the 'top' of society. Thus, the social structure might not be referred to directly, but it is present in the respondents' statements in some other ways. It seems to suggest 'dependencies' and financial constraints and also the fact that some radical fans become involved in criminal trajectories due to the fanatics' structure (hierarchies and networks within the mileu). Some evidence points to issues of financial constraint, criminality and exploitation.

Opinions of some older fans were unanimous when it comes to the typical pathologies leading to common crimes. As time went on and as they moved away from the football fans rituals, the ex-fanatics observe the world they found it hard to part with, more precisely. They are able to outline even very complex networks of dependencies that connect fanatics leaders, mainstream politicians, and organized crime, just as Kitka does:

> Another thing is money. In Poland, we haven't noticed yet that in Europe tickets for matches are terribly expensive and it's become a sport only for the high-earning middle class. It became terribly commercialized. Club budgets, salaries, transfers, television rights, they cost a huge amount of money. All those who are able to make comparisons have been fans for 30-40 years, middle-aged people admit that the appeal has gone. (..) Organized crime, which wasn't there before, only began to develop after the fall of communism. People learned how to do stuff, extort, blackmail, anyway many of these circles infiltrate each other. I am convinced that most of these gangsters, say managers, are people who don't go to work. (..)

> These are people who lived off extortion, drug trafficking, racketeering. At best they are bouncers or bodyguards. Even the president's bodyguard was a former Teddy Boy, a kind of a militia. And everyone said, he is a former 'Tedek', we already have contacts there. Which kind of streamlines the president or someone, which allows you to somehow control the situation. Which was bullshit. [...]All the time we are in a situation where if someone wants to step on the fans' toes harder, they'll take him to the cleaners. Because clubs live off television rights and if the club wants to rise above average then it must have income from the cups. Europe pays quite well, even mediocre clubs, so it pays to play in the cups. Kick the club out of the cups, do a boycott, make a riot. The club pays fines and the match is played with empty stands. There were 3 or 4 very nice matches that I didn't win because people went too far. (Kitka)

Panufcy, in turn, points to the associations of gangsters, leaders of fanatics and uniformed services:

> Different things happened. Thugs, dealers, gangsters, smugglers. For Teddy Bears 95 it was not just about raids in off-site matches. There was training, even martial arts, led by a specialist, an anti-terrorist. (Panufcy)

Piotr is also aware of the exploitation of ordinary fanatics or other fans by leaders and their organisations:

> What do Legia supporters think about paying for the association etc.? I suspect that most fans are not interested in how much and who makes money from it. They pay as much as they want. Maybe 20% of them know how much it costs. We know the cost of the match ticket, because it is fixed. Travel is also a fixed cost. Sometimes you get some gear in the form of scarves or something, but obviously the fan's association keep a tight a grip on it. There are no organized trips for some events, because there is a select group that goes if there are only a few tickets. But for open matches like Silesia, Lech, Lechia, where there are large sectors, they need to be filled. The travel cost is high, I think they 'cut the cost'. Is this exploitation? I think so, but I think it is also necessary for this amount to compensate the tifos, possible penalties and I don't know, bribing a fan if something happens even from prison, when bail needs to be paid. (Piotr)

4.6 Gender dimension: how to be a man

Rites of passage are understood to be structured as three stages. The first stage – **pre-liminal rites** (or rites of separation) - involves a metaphorical 'death', as a young man is forced to leave something behind by breaking with previous practices and routines. The second stage (**liminal rites** or transition rites) involves 'the creation of a tabula rasa, through the removal of previously taken-for-granted forms and limits'. Two elements are essential for this stage. The first condition, the rite, has to follow a strictly prescribed sequence, where everybody knows when, what and how to behave. The second condition is that everything must be done under the authority of a leader who is the master of ceremonies. This passage (when the transition takes place) implies an actual passing through the threshold that marks the boundary between two phases. The third stage (**post-liminal rites** or rites of incorporation) serves to reintroduce the subject into society with a new identity.

Male initiation, which Victor Turner considered the most typical rite, helps us to gain a better understanding of 'tripartite structure' of liminal situations defined by Arnold van Gennep. In such rites of passage, the experience is highly structured. The first phase (the rite of separation) requires the child to go through a separation from his family; this involves his 'death' as a child, as childhood is effectively left behind. In the second stage, the boy must pass a 'test' to prove he is ready for adulthood. If he succeeds,

the third stage (incorporation) involves a celebration of the 'new birth' of the adult and his welcoming back into society.

By constructing this three-part sequence, van Gennep identified a pattern he believed was inherent in all ritual passages and was convinced that the sequence is universal e.g. 'all societies use rites to demarcate transitions'.

A rite of passage, involves some change to the participants, especially their social status, and in the first phase (separation) comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual from an earlier fixed point in the social structure. Their status thus becomes liminal. In such a liminal situation, young men live outside their normal environment and are encouraged to question their self and the existing social order through a series of rituals that often involve acts of pain. In this sense, liminal periods are 'destructive' as well as 'constructive, meaning that the live experience during liminality will prepare the young man to occupy a new social role or status which is defined by the patterns of culture of his group or society as a whole.

The most important features that distinguish a man from a boy cultivated in this milieu are related to the mythology of brotherhood built on the experience gained on the battlefield. It can be said that we are dealing with Carl Jung archetype of a man as a king or a warrior, widely discussed in the literature related to the so cold 'modern man malaise', and thus the subject of which Bly and Rohr, already quoted, are concerned.

A good illustration of the male qualities to which young people entering the world of 'fanatics' aspire are t-shirts advertised by one of the companies targeting their products to this milieu. The role of an older man—father, uncle, older brother—in the group which has incorporated the young man is of interest for psychologists and teachers. For us the most interesting is a sociological view on the evolution of masculinity and the father's role in the 20th century. 'By the middle of the twentieth century in Europe and North America a massive change had taken place: the father was working, but the son could not see him at work' (Bly, 2004: 100). Bly underlines that it was not the case of hunter societies, agricultural and craft ones where fathers and sons worked together: 'When a father, absent during the day, returns home at six, his children receive only his temperament, and not his teaching. If the father is working for a corporation, what is there to teach?' (Bly, 2004: 102).

A football fan group functioning as a *communitas* or anti-structure offers youngsters an alternative life to family, school or work. None of those three highly structured and hierarchical spheres offers as much as the football community. The young man is involved in direct social relations and experiences a spirit of freedom and equality, as well as a 'second father'.

'The general assumption underlying all initiatory rites is that unless a young male is shown real power through a community of wise elders, he will always seek false power and likely will spend much of his life seeking prestige, perks and possessions.'(Rohr, 2010: 17).

Unless a young 'fanatic' candidate, while searching for a masculinity pattern (which is so important for him), is shown a community of wise elders he will found false power equal to violence. In this vein, Piotr37 said:

> I don't remember my father well. I was eight years old when they split up. Father left. There, abroad, he started a new family, but he kept sending us money, so it wasn't all that bad. I was raised by my mother, and there were my two younger siblings. As a child, I was an altar boy until the end of primary school. The church also raised me because my mother is very religious. As a teenager, I did various sports. I regularly went to matches with boys from the neighbourhood (my peers and a few years older). I was 14 or 15 at the time. (Piotr37).

Other respondents echoed similar themes:

> In my family, my father discouraged me, mocked me, and always made fun of it. At first he forbade it, then when he saw he couldn't stop me, he started to poke fun at je, trying to put me off, and later it turned out that when he'd get a free ticket from work, he'd bring it home. He always thought football was shit, Legia were losers. I only heard that stuff, you know? But my older brother started going, and of course I imitated my older brother. (Kitka)

The importance of male role models in the family was stressed by Jan in a different way:

> I come from a family with strong football fan roots. I started to go to matches with my dad and grandad. The first matches I remember were when he was about 4 years old. Sometimes my uncles joined us (one is my father's aunt's sister's husband, the other is his mother's brother). (Jan)

To understand better how the group is a new and better 'home' for a young man, one has to observe the liminal rites which are typical for this fanatics milieu. In a liminal situation, young men are encouraged to contest the existing social order through a series of rituals that often involve acts of violence. The liminal phase is destructive if we think about the patterns of behaviour at a 'normal society'.

For fanatics, hand-to-hand combat is a proof of courage and perfecting their male qualities. A fanatic who is able to take it against the fans of the hostile club with which he has a 'scythe' proves that he deserved by the action to be part of the group. One can find an analogy here with the battlefield, when during hostilities, even a small unit of a regular army or partisans is confronted with the overwhelming opponent. It's not just about building a certain image of the world, which is additionally powered by characters from film or computer war games. In the case of fanatics who will not retreat in a situation of fighting with supporters of a hostile club, war mythology gives meaning to brutal clashes involving hand-to-hand combat. To lead it, the most determined fanatics excel in martial arts, especially when conducted with almost none rules, unlike boxing or judo. The popularity of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) seems to be based on the fact that football fans are both the audience of these fights and they perfect themselves in them. Most of the fan associations have their own trained militias that are ready to take part in 'forest fights' (*ustawki*). Sometimes - as they also say in the interviews - using the help of militias of friendly clubs.

The decisive factor for liminal phase is violence which is a sign of *communitas*. Violence in this environment plays a key role. It is around violence that alliances are built and it serves to establish a hierarchy between different fanatic groups. There are in this groups whole traditions that celebrate 'battles', 'chiefs' and 'wars' that are over or in progress. An example is the story that Peter answered the researchers:

> There are many years of tradition there, arrangements between the fans, arrangements where there are agreements, arrangements where there's bad blood, arrangements where you go, when you go to a match, you go on a kind of adventure. For example, the last visit of Legia fans in Legnica ended in a little riot there, a clash with the supporters of Śląsk Wrocław onsite. And during the fight there was a clash with Widzew fans who came to Siedlce. On the highway, two brawls like this happened along the way. And how is this interconnected? These are long-standing traditions. (Piotr)

These are not just fights or verbal violence. As a result of conflicts between groups of fanatics, there are regular deaths, fanatics who died during 'acts', were attacked, beaten to death, and murdered with knives or machetes. One of such stories is quoted by Robert:

> I had a friend from my block of flats, he's called '***' and he was also such a diehard fan, no militia fighting or something, only a normal fan and he had our Korona flags hanging in the

> stadiums. It was summer and we played against Legia Warsaw, then in 2004. And there was nice weather, he cracked open the window in the car, and the day before they installed GPS under the bonnet, those guys from Wisla Krakow. They just knew he would have these flags so they would know where he was going. And when he stopped at a red light, he had that window open, and they stabbed him, but they didn't steal the flags because they knew they'd killed him. He had 13 stab wounds. There's bad blood between us and Wisła. To this day, in memory of ***, we don't organize trips to Wisła Krakow. We go to Cracovia, of course in a larger group, because you have to mobilize, but we don't go to Wisla Krakow. We don't go because we already signed a pact for the late ***. (Robert)

Usually, however, during scheduled fan matches, basic rules are adopted and their violation is perceived as dishonourable. Certain tools or weapons are allowed, others are not. The respondents, such as the Panufcy, also pointed to the differences between Poland and the countries located to the east of it. Russian fanatics are particularly infamous here. Panufcy describes one of such fights, which ended very bloody for Poles:

> There is this unwritten contract between the fans that the fights are unarmed. Cracovia and Wisła Krakow fans break this rule, they swing at each other with machetes, axes, and baseball bats. When we arranged fights in the woods, there was, for example, an agreement that someone would pull the handbrake on the train and the fans would get off where we were to meet. Is the number of fighters predetermined? It happens, but often only Teddy Boys 95 go. In Russia there was this situation where a meeting was set up in the forest, and Legia and Bielsko fans came from Poland. Legia sent a weak crew and people say they ran away into the woods. Bielsko did better, but the lads came back with broken arms and legs. Those guys were stomping on their heads. On the other hand, they were MMA fighters. (Panufcy)

Violence in this environment is not subject to criticism. On the contrary, it is positively received as part of life and as a valuable form of relationship associated with such qualities as idealism and honour. Mirra directly states:

> If someone really believes in where he or she is, who he or she socializes with, and wants to fight for his or her ideas, then sometimes there's violence in all that, not just physical one, really. It's not just about beating someone up, but also about this violence, this very psychological violence, that you have to hammer your point home, and the other side doesn't necessarily need to like that. (Mirra)

For some, this violence is endless. Others, such as the now-priest, former fanatic John, reject her as they approach religion.

> We went to church on Sundays and holidays, didn't eat meat on Fridays, went to confession a few times a year. When I started getting into fights with others, I stopped going to confession. My parents had no idea about it. In the final year of school, I got closer to the church. I think two things led to that. First—I was beaten up after a match. I had my head split open. I was hit with a wooden bat with a sharpened tip. I was in hospital because I needed stitches. They also broke my arms. I saw it differently after that. I also beat others up (with a hammer handle I took from our workshop). [...]I still went to matches, but I stopped fighting, graffitiing the walls. I didn't have time to go on trips. Other things consumed me. Later I went to the seminar. It was a very conscious decision. I saw myself as a fan differently. That was in the past. I am a priest-fan, and recently also a coach. [...]I used to beat others up myself and I had to deal with this resentment of myself for what I did. Fortunately, I didn't kill anyone, but I beat people up, called them names, shouted in the stadiums (offensively), I wrote indecent things. Here I want

> to say—I don't remember more sins ... but that's not the point ... I can blame it on the stupidity of adolescence, but nothing will change the fact that I had this aggression towards other people. I just planned to beat people up and I did it. I didn't do it to hurt anyone, but for others to see that I was doing it. (Jan)

His history shows that such a path exists, but in others, the declared commitment to Christianity, the so-called traditional values or conservatism, does not mean that he rejects the use of violence. As in the case of Panufcy, Piotr, Robert and Mirra, it is part of their lives and a way to build social hierarchies. Honour, Fatherland, God and violence go hand in hand for them, as for Piotr37. He states outright:

> I am a Patriot with a capital P. For me, God, Honour, and Homeland are not empty words. Unfortunately, I had to leave Poland, my beloved club, and live far away for many years. Someone who is not a patriot and doesn't know what it means to love his country won't understand it. It hurt even more because I couldn't come to Poland for matches because I couldn't afford it. I felt like a traitor. I am a fan to the core. Not some football hooligan. I'm no choir boy, I had a few slips, some club riots, spontaneous brawls, but I'm not a hooligan or thug. I travelled around the country with people who think the same way I do. When I worked in Ireland, I always wore the club badge and the Polish flag, a little pin. I often pray for the good fortune of the club. When I was a young boy, I would hop off to the church before every match and pray. (Piotr37)

Interviews with older football fans captured this phase of the rites of passage which marks the return to society. This process can take a long time as it is difficult to part with a group whose recognition is important and that provides an opportunity to spend time 'just having fun' and support your team in a very differently from most people who watch games on TV or online. In one of the interviews, an older fan who passed on to his son the tradition of supporting Legia said that his son attends matches but does not like sport. In the course of the interview, it turned out that what the father meant by 'sport' was the 'sport' of the fanatic, that is fighting the fans of other clubs with whom you have past history ('scythes'). However, now this older fan recognised it was time to move into another phase of life, when you start a family, earn money and raise children. This phase is characterised by one's departure from *communitas*. In its place there is a process of the mythologisation of what happened in youth and a new framing of identity as 'a real Patriot'.

Indeed, our interviews with older football fans show how subsequent phases of the 'male life adventure' involve a process of 'returning to society' and eventually parting with the anti-structure. Fans in their forties who participated in the study demonstrated a self-distancing from their own biography, signalling they had become 'ex-fanatics'. Over time, they start to look down on the young fans 'who run the streets', although this distancing is never fully achieved because love for the club remains closely related to love for the homeland. Betrayal of the club colours would be as strongly condemned as betrayal of your country. At the same time, in most cases, prejudices persist and only a small proportion of the older fan community is able to break free of them. When they rationalise their past, they tend to adopt two kinds of positions. The first is that of the 'expert', who views the contemporary world of football as ruled by money flowing from transfers, media, fan gadgets and matches. The second, and more common, position among 'ex-fanatics', is illustrated by one of Legia's die-hard fans, Pawel, who claimed that 'fanatics' are not distinguished by their racism; biker groups are perceived as racist in a similar way. Extending this thought, he noted, that fanatics are no worse than the rest of Polish society. As he put it, 'We Poles, in general, have a problem with racism, not only in stadiums' (Pawel).

5. Conclusions

On the basis of the analysis presented above, we draw several conclusions.

The radical fan milieu is a social phenomenon (movement) characterised by a strong sense of collective identity (belonging) based on shared values, attitudes and symbols rather than class or socio-economic status. The movement is characterised by a 'high intensity' of belonging and accompanying symbolism and patterns of behaviour. One of the features of identity construction through participation in the movement is an emphasis on the image of the enemy. The enemy is multi-faceted: ranging from fans of rival teams (who nonetheless share a similar set of values) to the police to social minorities defined through ethnic, racial, religious, or ideological terms as well as sexual orientation. Participants in the movement have a varying degree of commitment to political ideology, but there is a strong presence of elements of (radical) nationalism, both inside and outside of the football stadium. Although signs of local patriotism related to the city or region are present in banners and on tattoos, the visible and dominant tendency is to manifest nationalistic symbols.

A more complex issue is the movement's relationship with its broader social environment. On the one hand, it is strongly subcultural in nature, rooted in its own code of behaviour and values that separate it from the wider society. Its frequent focus on violent confrontation with opponents, especially the fans of rival clubs, is condemned by mainstream society or, at least, considered irrational and harmful. The focus on physical prowess and fighting ability among the radical fan milieu is both feared and mocked by the public. Also some other values and behaviours are often in contrast with the attitudes of the general society (e.g. the frequently intense hostility against state institutions such as the police is generally not shared by the public at large). Overtly racist behaviour and other forms of extreme intolerance are generally not approved by mainstream society either, as well as general opposition to the law.

On the other hand, it can be argued that certain tenets of the value system shared by the radical football fans are not necessarily subcultural or 'extreme' in the context of Polish society, but they provide a bridge with some of the values which are also present in the social mainstream. In particular, the strongly emphasized identification with national symbols and traditions seems often in line with the values occupying a hegemonic space in the mainstream of contemporary Polish society. As described above, the declaration of Roman Catholic religious affiliation is in itself a frequent marker of Polish national identity and tradition. The annual pilgrimage of the Polish football fan movement to Czestochowa symbolizes a unique merger of religious, national and political-ideological identity and symbolism of the Polish football fandom. It is arguably the most symbolic expression of the fan milieu's connection with the social mainstream through the institution of the church and the traditionalist legitimization of a movement frequently and superficially dismissed as unequivocally anti-social. On the contrary, in this case it is aligned with the country's most conservative and powerful social and moral institution.

Moreover, the sometimes hostile attitude to minorities on the part of radical football fans in Poland does not always fit within the perspective of anti-mainstream attitudes and challenging mainstream values. To be sure, the most aggressive and brutal types of behaviour are generally met with public disapproval and instances of hate speech and hate crimes are indeed considered crimes by the penal code (even if the implementation of these legal provisions is notoriously deficient), but anti-minority attitudes have also been increasingly present in the social and political mainstream too, especially since the significant changes in the social and political constellation in 2015 when anti-refugee discourse dominated the national parliamentary electoral campaign. In 2020, homophobic discourse largely dominated the presidential campaign. Mainstream politics and media have not been free from xenophobic and intolerance, on the contrary, they have frequently reinforced them. Therefore, the radical nationalist views of many of the radical football fans are, again, not necessarily a sign of dissidence, they can be found in

the 'middle of society' as well. Rather than being a radical ideology on society's margins they can be often seen as strongly related to the hegemonic received culture.

Finally, the theme of violence—arguably the most anti-social aspect of the radical football fan milieu—can also be reconsidered in terms of its relationship to the rules of mainstream society. Clearly, the usage of violence by radical fans goes against the idea of state monopoly of violence, a cornerstone of the contemporary social and political order as spelt out by Max Weber. As demonstrated, controversially, by Anthony Burgess's (and Stanley Kubrick's) 'A Clockwork Orange', violence can offer an allure of counter-cultural liberation, even—or, perhaps, especially—when the general public would view it as mindless. Indeed, the arranged fights ('*ustawki*') of antagonistic football hooligan groups are considered as purposeless and silly and/or dangerous by society at large. Although violence is often present in the respondents' accounts, some of them view it positively, some are neutral, while others have a more critical view of the phenomenon of violence in the football fan milieu.

At the same time, however, one has to note the high level of codification of the violence in the football fan milieu. While the 'knife pact' does not apply to Krakow, it is an exception to the rule: the culture of football-related violence in Poland is highly regulated by a set of rules. These rules remain outside of the state laws, but there is no doubt the norms are generally clear and, by and large, adhered to. Some sociological thinkers such as Michel Foucault (among many others) have argued that (structural) violence permeates contemporary society on different levels and in many different forms (including family, state, media, and more). In this vein, the openly violent elements of the football fan culture are not necessary just a 'deviation' from the deeper norms of society: they can be interpreted as yet another form of embodiment of the pathological normalcy of a violent society.

6. References

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7. Appendices

Appendix 7.1 Socio-demographic profile of the respondent set

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Education	Employment	Ethnicity	Family status	Gender	Religion	Religiosity	Residential Status
Michał	28	Completed HE	Full time employment	Pole	single	Male	Catholic	Strong believer and practising	lives independently alone
Wacek	26	Completed VSE	seasonal/odd job	Pole	single	Male	Catholic	n/a	lives independently alone
Mirra	27	Completed HE	Full time employment	Pole	has a boyfriend	Female	Catholic	n/a	lives independently with friends
Paweł2	26	Completed HE	Full time employment	Pole	married	Male	Catholic	Strong believer and practising	lives with his wife
Michał (gm)	25	Completed HE	n/a	Pole	n/a	Male	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ona (gm)	27	n/a	n/a	Pole	has a boyfriend	Female	Catholic	n/a	n/a
Jan	40+	Completed HE	Full time employment	Pole	celibacy	Male	Catholic	Strong believer and practising	lives in the parish house
Kacper	21	Currently in HE	Part time employment	Pole	single	Male	No religion	Atheist	lives with his parents

Rob	47	Completed HE	Full time employment	Pole	married	Male	Catholic	Not practising	lives with his family
Sandra	27	Completed VSE	Full time employment	Pole	single	Female	Catholic	Not practising	lives with her parents
Violetta	33	Completed VSE	self-employment	Pole	married	Female	Catholic	Not practising	lives with her family
Piotr37	37	Completed VSE	self-employment	Pole	married	Male	Catholic	Believer and practising	lives with his family
Kitka	55	Completed HE	Full time employment	Pole	married	Male	No religion	Non-believer	lives with his family
Lech	40	Completed HE	self-employment	Pole	married	Male	Catholic	Believer and practising	lives with his family
Baltic	40	Completed VSE	Full time employment	Pole	married	Male	n/a	n/a	lives with his family
Robert	21	Currently in HE	Full time employment	Pole	single	Male	Catholic	Believer and practising	lives independently alone
Patryk	22	Completed VSE	Full time employment	Pole	married	Male	n/a	n/a	lives separately when working abroad and twice a month with his family
Adam	24	Currently in HE	Odd job	Pole	single	Male	Catholic	Believer and practising	lives with his parents
Panufcy	40	Completed	Full time	Pole	married	Male	Catholic	Not	lives with his

		VSE	employment					practising	family
Paweł	45	Completed HE	Full time employment	Pole	married	Male	No religion	Non-believer	lives with his family
Piotr	39	Completed HE	Full time employment	Pole	married	Male	No religion	Non-believer	lives with his family
ONR	20-30	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity	Pole	asked for anonymity	Male	Catholic	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity
ONRka	20-30	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity	Pole	asked for anonymity	Famale	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity
Alek	20-30	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity	Pole	asked for anonymity	Male	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity
Odra	20-30	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity	Pole	asked for anonymity	Famale	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity
Niemien	20-30	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity	Pole	asked for anonymity	Male	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity	asked for anonymity