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2

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to present the second issue of *Studia Territorialia* for 2024, entitled "Sport and Politics: Contexts, Connections, Confrontations."

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, sport has become an inseparable part of modern life. It has played an increasingly important role in modern societies, from entertainment to commerce and public health. It has penetrated the institutional fabric of society and been more and more involved in the formation and expression of local, national, and even international collective identities. Prior to World War I, all these aspects of sport could be said to be in *statu nascendi*. However, after 1918, sport gradually evolved into an established phenomenon in contemporary mass society, with an increasingly strong link to politics.

In some instances, this evolution has manifested itself in the use of sport as a platform for promoting nationalist, racist, and colonial agendas. It has occasionally been exploited as an instrument of control in the social, gender, and religious spheres. Last but not least, it has become a big, profitable business.

In the period leading up to World War II, various social and professional groups pursued their political agendas through sporting activities. The rise of authoritarian and totalitarian dictatorships was accompanied by the politicization of sport. Such regimes valued sport as a means of self-promotion and for defining themselves vis-à-vis the outside world. During both world wars, sport was incorporated into the war effort. Strong athletes were promoted as heroes who embodied the best qualities of a given nation and team sports were likened to the combat activities of military units. Not surprisingly, sports activities were incorporated into military training.

After World War II, when the world was gripped by a bipolar power struggle, and later an unpredictable multipolar competition, sport fulfilled other

prominent political needs. From a socio-cultural perspective, sport was a stage for the emancipation of racial and gender minorities and the pursuit of other agendas. In the international context, attempts at using sport as a bridge between the two blocs alternated with celebrating international sporting events, including the Olympics, as opportunities to marginalize and weaken geopolitical rivals. In recent years, some autocratic regimes have continued to use sport as a tool for propaganda and the promotion of their power. These regimes' rivals have countered by excluding their national sports teams from participation in international competitions.

This special issue features three full-length articles that deal with the various entanglements of sport and politics. The contributions herein offer diverse disciplinary and methodological insights into sports as a political phenomenon, seen from the perspectives of historiography and sociology, and through an anthropological lens.

The opening article is a contribution to the historiography of the German Democratic Republic. In this study, Mike Dennis examines the role that sport played in the collapse of state socialism in East Germany. He shows how sport exacerbated existing tensions in East German politics. He further highlights how the state's prioritization of top-level sports fueled popular protests and clashed with growing individualization in lifestyles. He argues that young people's desires to shape their own lives, free from control by the state-party SED, led to increased interest in minor sports and soccer. Moreover, tournaments in these sports became common venues for private German-German encounters among their fans, thus undermining East Germany's communist rule.

German soccer fandom is also the subject of the second article. Focusing on the post-unification period, Arne Koch and John Hanson examine the interplay between soccer fandom and political activism in Germany. The authors trace the evolution of soccer fan engagement from sports-specific concerns to broader societal issues, to illustrate how supporters of select German soccer clubs articulate dissent against commercialization of sport and advocate for ethical governance within clubs. The authors conclude by arguing that in doing so, German soccer fans are increasingly challenging traditional notions of belonging and positioning themselves as active participants in club governance and societal debates.

Finally, in the third article, Lívia Šavelková provides an anthropological account of Indigenous peoples and their quest for sovereign representation at the Olympic Games throughout the last decades. She points to the structural setting of the International Olympic Committee as epitomized in its Rule 50 and

its requirement of "political neutrality." She holds that this strict setting has been instrumental in preserving the inequal standing of Indigenous people in global sport and the predominant discourses related to them.

We hope you will find the contributions in this issue thought-provoking, and wish you an enjoyable read.

On behalf of the Editors,

Lucie Filipová, Jan Šír, and Jiří Vykoukal
doi: 10.14712/23363231.2025.1

ARTICLES

2024 ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE PAG. 13–46
STUDIA TERRITORIALIA 2

HOW SPORT HELPS EXPLAIN THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

MIKE DENNIS
UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

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Abstract
While the exploitation of sport for the legitimation of state socialism in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) has attracted widespread attention, the role of sport in the collapse of the one-party dictatorship is a little explored area. With particular reference to the 1980s, this article argues how sport, at elite and recreational level, both reflected and exacerbated tensions and conflicts in politics, the economy, culture and society. Although the deepening economic malaise, the courage of protesters on the streets of Leipzig and the shock waves triggered by Gorbachev's reforms were primary agents in the fall of Communism, the prevalence of autonomous activities in East German sport and the ensuing challenge to authority contributed significantly to the socio-cultural defeat of GDR-style socialism. In effect, sport represented a way of saying 'no' that grew ever louder, more diverse and more widespread as the fateful autumn of 1989 approached.
Keywords: East Germany; mass and elite sport; sports fans and agency; transnational history; Cold War; Berlin Wall
DOI: 10.14712/23363231.2025.2

Mike Dennis is Emeritus Professor of German History at the University of Wolverhampton, England. Address any correspondence to Faculty of Arts, Business Studies and Social Sciences, Mary Seacole Building, Nursery Street, City Campus Molineux, Wolverhampton, WV1 1AD, United Kingdom. E-mail: J.M.Dennis@wlv.ac.uk.

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Introduction: Sport, State and Society

In 1988, just one year before the Berlin Wall was dismantled, the GDR[1] achieved a remarkable set of results at the Summer Olympics held in Seoul. Despite the country's small demographic base, its multi-talented squad, with 102 medals, finished a close second to the Soviet Union but ahead of its main capitalist rivals, the USA and the Federal Republic of Germany. Erich Honecker,[2] the veteran leader of the ruling party, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED),[3] could bask in the reflected glory of the 'diplomats in track suits' who had been programmed for success in the medal factories of special sports schools and at the generously funded elite sports clubs associated with the Dynamo Sports Association, the National People's Army and the umbrella organization responsible for mass and elite sport, the German Gymnastics and Sports Federation (*Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund*, DTSB). The sports system was ruthlessly instrumentalized by the SED to help the GDR break out of its international diplomatic isolation, to symbolize the prowess of the young East German state and, in general, to underpin the domestic legitimation of the state socialist system in its inter-systemic rivalry with the West German liberal democratic and capitalist order and in the hard-fought sports contests with its fraternal socialist allies in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

As for Honecker himself, IOC President Juan Samaranch awarded him the IOC Gold Olympic Order in 1985 for his role in the campaign to avoid another Olympic boycott. Even more significantly, in September 1987, Honecker paid what was *de facto* an official visit to West Germany during which he met Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Richard von Weizsäcker. On his return, he assured his Politbüro colleagues that it had demonstrated the independence and sovereignty of the GDR.[4] While there is good reason to attribute to sport

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1 The German Democratic Republic was founded in 1949 and incorporated into the Federal Republic of Germany in 1990. Its capital was East Berlin and East Germany will be used interchangeably with GDR.

2 Erich Honecker (1912–1994), born in Neunkirchen (Saarland), held the following high offices: chair of the Free German Youth movement 1949 to 1955, First Secretary of the SED 1971 to 1976 and General Secretary until 1989, and chair of the State Council 1976 to 1989. As SED Central Committee Secretary for Security, he was in charge of the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

3 The SED was founded in 1946 and asserted itself as the country's dominant political force in the 1950s.

4 Detlef Nakath and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, eds., *Von Hubertusstock nach Bonn. Eine dokumentierte Geschichte der deutsch-deutschen Beziehungen auf höchster Ebene 1980–1987* (Berlin: Dietz, 1996), 336–338.

a significant role in system maintenance, within a few months of Seoul and with thousands fleeing across the Iron Curtain in Hungary and Czechoslovakia and protests being staged on the streets of Leipzig, East Berlin and other major cities, Honecker would be ousted from power by a palace revolution. Soon afterwards, the chaotic opening of the Berlin Wall on the evening of 9th November 1989 precipitated the collapse of the SED regime and, with astonishing speed, the unification of Germany in October of the following year. Within a few years, sport would undergo the radical transformation that affected all sectors of East German society and top coaches and sports scientists involved in the doping programme and the architect of the 'sports miracle', Manfred Ewald, would be brought to trial.[5]

Such an outcome was not on the horizon when, at the SED's Eighth Congress in 1971, Erich Honecker addressed the societal role of sport: "Our state is well regarded in the world not only because of the excellent performance of our top athletes but also because of the unrelenting attention we devote to physical culture and sports to make them an everyday need of each and every citizen."[6]

Engagement in sport was to enhance labour productivity and develop key characteristics of the socialist personality such as discipline, honesty and willingness to defend the homeland. Various schemes were devised to facilitate mass participation, among them the Joint Sports Programme of the DTSB, Confederation of Free German Trade Unions (*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, FDGB) and Free German Youth (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*, FDJ), to encourage not only active forms of relaxation such as swimming and walking but also the competitive spirit of participants. Furthermore, given sport's political, cultural and ideological power, it was incorporated into the SED's societal policy as reconfigured by Honecker soon after he came to power in 1971. Called the unity of economic and social policy, it constituted an informal social contract whereby the regime deployed a range of social benefits such as a heavily subsidized social welfare system, more apartment housing, job security guarantees and heavy investment in top-level sport to elicit, at the very least, the tacit support of the populace for the East German socialist state.

The notion of sport as a social glue has some backing from research by a Leipzig Centre for Youth Research project carried out in 1978: a sample of about 3,250 young people up to 30 years of age found that over 90 percent took

[5] Manfred Ewald (1926–2002) was Chair of the State Committee for Physical Culture and Sport from 1952 to 1960 and then President of the DTSB from 1961 to 1988.

[6] Wolfgang Gitter and Bernhard Wilk, *Fun – Health – Fitness. Physical culture and sport in the GDR* (East Berlin: Panorama, 1974), 15.

delight in the GDR's position as a leading sports nation (*Sportland*) and almost all wished for victory at international events.[7] Careful research by Thomas Fetzer underpins this argument: on the basis of the consumption of sport on television, he contends that enthusiasm was high for success in international sport from 1973 onwards before tailing off in the mid-1980s as the dark side of the elite sports model became more apparent.[8]

While the negative aspects of elite sport were palpable at domestic level, Honecker and many other members of the top political and sports echelons clung to its perceived soft power benefits until the late 1980s. In doing so, they had to weigh the benefits against the onerous financial, ethical and health costs of the hunt for Faust's gold. The title of this article is seemingly less ambitious than that in an interview with Thomas Brussig as to how football might explain the world,[9] and it is certainly not claimed that sport was the major propellant of the opening of the Berlin Wall. The novel aspect of this paper, however, is to stress interconnections in four areas that draw upon transnational approaches to encounters across the Iron Curtain and upon everyday interests and activities of sports enthusiasts that challenged the basic ideological and political tenets of state socialism.

With particular reference to the 1980s, it will be shown how popular resentment spiralled over the neglect of mass sport due to the heavy subsidization of an ailing top-level sports system; how the snowballing fitness movement and fun sports highlighted a shift in society towards greater independence in leisure time; how the frequency of cross-border exchanges between East and West German sports fans turned the Iron Curtain into an increasingly porous membrane and undermined the SED notion of a socialist nation in the GDR; and how the

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7 Peter Voß and Hans Heinicke, "Das Verhältnis Jugendlicher zu Körperkultur und Sport sowie Formen, Bedingungen und Probleme seiner Realisierung: Ergebnismaterial zum Forschungsbericht," ZIJ Leipzig, 1978, 5, 17–18, 76, https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-380003. Much lower rates were recorded for the view that top-level sport furthered other areas of sport, for example, mass sport. The researchers also found that the material conditions for taking part in sport, especially in leisure and recreational sports such as table tennis, swimming and bowling, were inadequate both in quality and quantity. See ibid., 78.

8 Thomas Fetzer, "Die gesellschaftliche Akzeptanz des Leistungssportsystems," in *Sport in der DDR. Eigensinn, Konflikte, Trends*, ed. Hans Joachim Teichler (Köln: Sport und Buch Strauß, 2003), 284–291, 299–302, 347–350.

9 "'Sich die ganze Welt vom Fußball her erklären': Thomas Brussig im Gespräch mit Stefan Hermanns und Markus Hesselmann," in *Querpässe. Beiträge zur Literatur-, Kultur- und Mediengeschichte des Fußballs*, ed. Ralf Adelmann, Rolf Parr, and Thomas Schwarz (Heidelberg: Synchron Publishers, 2003), 171–176. Brussig regards football as potentially both subversive and regime supportive: ibid., 175.

often spectacular defection of top East German athletes fed into the burgeoning emigration movement that erupted into the mass flight at the end of the decade and ultimately the opening of the Berlin Wall.

In short, the explanatory thrust of the paper is that sport both reflected and exacerbated gathering crisis symptoms in other spheres of society while simultaneously undergoing its own structural crisis as the 1980s unfolded. The methodology combines a view from above, with reference to the main policymakers in Party and government, with one from below, focusing on how participants in sport, especially fans, sought to carve out autonomous spaces, whether in the GDR itself or across the borders in socialist Eastern Europe. With its intrinsic characteristic of having a life of its own, sport had the capacity to unfetter the 'powerless' even in one of the country's most thoroughly controlled spheres.[10]

Sources

Given the appeal of sport and the accomplishments of the GDR's 'diplomats in tracksuits', it is surprising that it has been seriously neglected in many standard histories of the GDR both before and after 1990, for example, by Hermann Weber and Klaus Schroeder respectively. Other than forays into the Olympic Boycotts of 1980 and 1984, this is also true of many works on the Cold War, even by such a notable scholar as Odd Arne Westad.[11] In contrast, impressive research has been carried out on fundamental components of GDR sport, which this article will draw on to explore how popular attitudes towards sport intertwined with growing mass dissatisfaction with state socialism in the later years of SED rule. Hans Joachim Teichler has delineated the structures of top-level sport and edited invaluable collections of sports directives and policies emanating from the SED Politbüro and Central Committee Secretariat.[12] The clandestine doping

[10] The power of sport and play as both a dependent and an independent aspect of human agency is captured by Kay Schiller and Christopher Young, "The History and Historiography of Sport in Germany: Social, Cultural and Political Perspectives," *German History* 27, no. 3 (2009): 319, doi: 10.1093/gerhis/ghp029.

[11] Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (London: Allen Lane, 2017). For a discussion of the neglect of sport in Cold War studies, see Robert Edelman and Christopher Young, "Introduction. Explaining Cold War Sport," in *The Whole World Was Watching. Sport in the Cold War*, ed. Robert Edelman and Christopher Young (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 3–4.

[12] Hans Joachim Teichler and Klaus Reinartz, *Das Leistungssportsystem der DDR in den 80er Jahren und im Prozeß der Wende* (Schorndorf: Verlag Karl Hofmann, 1999).

programme,[13] surveillance by the Stasi,[14] and the comprehensive talent identification and development system[15] have also been thoroughly investigated, albeit not without controversy as to the uniqueness of the GDR sports model and the harms experienced by athletes.

Yet below the surface of the so-called 'sports miracle', researchers and investigative journalists have explored individual and collective agency in sport. In this context, notable contributions have been made by René Wiese and Jutta Braun on football fandom across the Berlin Wall[16] and by Alan McDougall on football culture and politics.[17] Hanns Leske has shown how, despite Stasi repression, the ministry and police failed to control and suppress 'deviant' fan behaviour in stadia and public places where regulation clashed with self-determination and the cultural power of football.[18] A similar pattern can be found in the battle between authority and enthusiasts in minor sports such as skateboarding, windsurfing and karate for sites in which to engage in new, autonomous activities.[19] Frequent private transnational cross-border encounters among sports fans, as in football and motor cycling, also exposed the limits of autocracy and the widening chinks in the Iron Curtain in the 1980s.[20]

The secondary literature is complemented by interviews, memoirs, and archival materials, especially those emanating from the SED, the DTSB and the

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[13] The pioneering work is Brigitte Berendonk, *Doping. Von der Forschung zum Betrug* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992).

[14] Giselher Spitzer, *Sicherungsvorgang Sport. Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit und der DDR-Spitzensport* (Schorndorf: Verlag Karl Hofmann, 2005).

[15] René Wiese, *Kaderschmieden des „Sportwunderlandes". Die Kinder- und Jugendsportsschulen der DDR* (Hildesheim: Arete, 2012).

[16] René Wiese and Jutta Braun, *Doppelpässe. Wie die Deutschen die Mauer umspielten* (Hamburg: Verlag Sport & Co., 2006).

[17] Alan McDougall, *The People's Game. Football, State and Society in East Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[18] Hanns Leske, *Erich Mielke, die Stasi und das runde Leder* (Göttingen: Die Werkstatt, 2004).

[19] Jutta Braun, "The People's Sport? Popular Sport and Fans in the Later Years of the German Democratic Republic," *German History* 27, no. 3 (2009): 414–428, doi: 10.1093/gerhis/ghp034; various contributions to Hans Joachim Teichler, ed., *Sport in der DDR. Eigensinn, Konflikte, Trends* (Köln: Sport und Buch Strauß, 2003).

[20] On transnational approaches in Communist studies, see Constantin Iordachi and Péter Apor, "Introduction. Studying Communist Dictatorships: From Comparative Communism to Transnational History," *East Central Europe* 40, no. 1–2 (2013): 1–35, doi: 10.1163/18763308-04001016. For GDR sport in a global context: Alan McDougall, "Fußball Internationale: Toward a Global History of GDR Football," in *Football Nation. The Playing Fields of German Culture, History and Society*, ed. Rebeccah Dawson, Bastian Heinsohn, Oliver Knabe, and Alan McDougall (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2023), 43–61; Daniel Lange, "Dynamo in Afrika: Doppelpass am Pulverfass," *Deutschland Archiv* (30 June 2022): 1–12, https://www.bpb.de/510044.

Ministry of State Security or Stasi.[21] Not only do SED materials shed light into the upper echelons of policymaking but Stasi records, with their orientation towards security, are invaluable for exploring fan disorder and defection in sport. Another crucial source is that of *Eingaben*, or citizen petitions, usually as letters sent individually or collectively, to government and Party bodies complaining about the many shortcomings in society such as declining living standards and restrictions on travel. Citizens had the constitutional right to complain and to receive an answer within a month. Among the torrent of complaints that poured into state and Party organs those in sport took issue with shortages of equipment, lack of facilities for training, restrictions on independent sporting activities, and corruption in football.[22] Letters of complaint to government and SED offices were also despatched outside the formal *Eingabe* channel; many of those sent anonymously, pervaded by biting criticism of dictatorial rule and lower living standards than in West Germany, found their way into the records of the notorious Stasi Main Department XX.[23] Together with *Eingaben*, these letters constitute an invaluable mosaic of everyday life and of voices from below.

Interviews are another form of voice. Whereas before unification, doping was occasionally mentioned in interviews with athletes who had fled the GDR, such as the sprinter Renate Neufeld,[24] post-unification interviews and memoirs provide moving testimonies to both short- and long-term physical and psychological harms resulting from doping and spying by the Stasi.[25] Interviews with football fans of clubs such as Union Berlin, Dynamo Berlin and Lok Leipzig help recreate the carnival atmosphere of fandom not immediately apparent

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[21] Crucial top-level sport directives and policy documents issued by the SED Politbüro are published in Hans Joachim Teichler, *Die Sportbeschlüsse des Politbüros. Eine Studie zum Verhältnis von SED und Sport mit einem Gesamtverzeichnis und einer Dokumentation ausgewählter Beschlüße* (Köln: Sport und Buch Strauß, 2002).

[22] For an examination of the culture of complaint and the intersection between the private and public spheres, see Paul Betts, *Within Walls. Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 173–192.

[23] A selection can be found in Siegfried Suckut, ed., *Volkes Stimmen. "Ehrlich, aber deutlich" – Privatbriefe an die DDR-Regierung* (Munich: dtv, 2016), with an introduction on pages 9 to 108.

[24] "DDR: Schluck Pillen oder kehr Fabriken aus," *Der Spiegel*, 19 March 1979, 194, 196, 198–199, 201, 204, 206–207.

[25] Hans-Georg Aschenbach, *Euer Held. Euer Verräter. Mein Leben für den Leistungssport* (Halle/Saale: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2012). Testimonies by athletes at the trials of GDR sports administrators and sports scientists are an essential record: Klaus Marxen and Gerhard Werle, eds., *Strafjustiz und DDR-Unrecht. Dokumentation*, Vol. 7: *Gefangenmisshandlung, Doping und sonstiges DDR-Unrecht* (Berlin: De Gruyter Recht, 2009); Sybille Reinhardt, *Schattengold. Eine Olympiasiegerin erzählt* (Zwickau: Tauchaer Verlag, 2008).

from the voluminous police and Stasi records.[26] Where official documentation is lacking, as in minor sports such as karate, interviews and memoirs are essential for tracking their development and struggle for space and tolerance.[27] Not all memoirs can be accepted at face value, particularly by many former officials and sports scientists, who tend to play down the negative aspects of the system and generally exculpate themselves of wrongdoing, a thread that runs through the recollections of Manfred Ewald, the autocratic and ruthlessly efficient DTSB President.[28]

The sources discussed above are indispensable for investigating the voices and everyday experiences of sports enthusiasts, whether at home or abroad. These insights into the base of society are often absent in what Jens Gieseke has called 'hidden' popular opinion surveys compiled by East and West German research institutes.[29] Rarely GDR representative, the East German surveys remained classified until the collapse of the GDR, with the SED so sensitive to any negative findings that it closed down the Institute for Public Opinion Research of the Central Committee in 1979. Among the most informative Western sources are the annual interviews conducted by the Infratest polling institute between 1968 and 1990 into West Germans' recollections of the opinions of their East German contacts during visits to the GDR.

The Infratest findings act as a lens on how the high levels of popular dissatisfaction with restrictions on travel, political pressures, consumer goods shortages and a strong desire for greater free time in the private sphere interact and overlap with sport-related grievances. On the other hand, unification was widely regarded as little more than a distant target and the GDR was for long perceived as a viable, separate state with significant social achievements in social security, job protection, and the health and education sectors.[30] With regard to these

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[26] Above all, Anne Hahn and Frank Willmann, eds., *Stadionpartisanen. Fußballfans und Hooligans in der DDR* (Halle/Saale: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2021). See also Frank Willmann, ed., *Fußball-Land DDR. Anstoß, Abpfiff, Aus* (Berlin: Eulenspiegel, 2004).

[27] On the importance of interviews for tracing the development of karate, see Kurt Repmann, "Die konfliktreiche Entwicklung des Karatesports in der DDR," in Teichler, ed., *Sport in der DDR*, 502.

[28] Manfred Ewald, *Ich war der Sport. Wahrheiten und Legenden aus dem Wunderland der Sieger. Manfred Ewald interviewt von Reinhold Andert* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1994).

[29] Jens Gieseke, "Opinion Polling Behind and Across the Iron Curtain: How West and East German Pollsters Shaped Knowledge Regimes on Communist Societies," *History of the Human Sciences* 29, no. 4–5 (2016): 77–98, doi: 10.1177/0952695116667880.

[30] Everhard Holtmann and Anne Köhler, *Wiedervereinigung vor dem Mauerfall. Einstellungen der Bevölkerung der DDR im Spiegel geheimer westlicher Meinungsumfragen* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2015); Anne Köhler and Volker Ronge, "'Einmal BRD-einfach': Die DDR-Ausreise-Welle im Frühjahr 1984," *Deutschland Archiv* 17, no. 12 (1984): 1280–1286; Richard Hilmer and Anne

components of the paternalistic *soziale Geborgenheit* of the Honecker era, similar attitude patterns were identified by the Institute for Sociology and Social Policy of the Academy of Social Sciences and other East German research institutes carrying out studies of popular opinion.[31] Significantly, even at a time when the GDR was unravelling, strong support for aspects of social policy, such as child-care facilities and social security, was recorded by the Institute for Sociology and Social Policy in 1988–1989.[32]

It was not until the 1980s were drawing to a close, above all in the crisis year of 1989, that Infratest data identified a sharp fall in support for the GDR as a separate state as well as for the state socialist system. One finding encapsulates the depth of the crisis: whereas in May 1989, about 50 percent of West Germans' Eastern contacts had expressed dissatisfaction with political conditions, the figure had soared to 70 percent in August.[33] The Leipzig Central Institute for Youth Research found a similar collapse in young people's identification with the GDR.[34] Other GDR researchers also drew attention to a generation gap: younger people were much more committed than older East Germans to individualistic values and far less to the collective norms of the past.[35]

In conclusion, the now declassified social science surveys, both East and West German, while surprisingly short on references to sport, help identify the political, economic, cultural and mental predeterminants of the opening of the Berlin Wall and provide context for how sport fits into the decline and fall narrative as regards travel, shortages of goods, political repression and, according to the Central Institute for Youth Research, the cultural revolution that found

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Köhler, "Die DDR läuft die Zukunft davon. Die Übersiedler-Flüchtlingswelle im Sommer 1989," *Deutschland Archiv* 22, no. 12 (1989): 1383–1393. On the other hand, Hans Georg Wieck, the head of the Federal Intelligence Service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*, BND) from 1985 to 1990, claims that the organization's systematic assessment, carried out every six months since 1986, by questionnaire of East Germans visiting the FRG or at the Marienfelde refugee centre showed that between 72 and 78 per cent wanted unification but that the wish for a higher standard of living rather than enthusiasm for democracy was a fundamental factor in keeping alive an all-German consciousness: Hermann Wentker, "Die DDR in den Augen des BND (1985–1990). Ein Interview mit Dr. Hans Georg Wieck," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 56, no. 12 (2008): 327–328, 337–339, doi: 10.1524/vfzg.2008.0012.

[31] On East German opinion surveying, see Thomas Gensicke, "Mentalitätswandel und Revolution. Wie sich die Bürger von ihrem System abwandten," *Deutschland Archiv* 25, no. 12 (1992): 1266–1283.

[32] Ibid., 1270, 1282.

[33] Holtmann and Köhler, *Wiedervereinigung*, 247.

[34] Walter Friedrich, "Mentalitätswandlungen der Jugend in der DDR," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 16–17 (13 April 1990): 27, 29, 30.

[35] Gensicke, "Mentalitätswandel," 1270, 1282.

expression in the wish to shape one's own life. Sport, however, is prominent in several of the institute's special investigations into the interests and leisure activities of East German youth. A 1987 survey of young workers and apprentices found a sharp drop in interest in sports participation since 1987. Not only these two groups but also students and members of the intelligentsia bemoaned the chronic shortages of skateboards, sailing boats, climbing equipment and surfing wear that restricted participation in sports of their own choice.[36] It is to these areas and cross border encounters among sports fans that this paper now turns.

The Structural Crisis of Elite Sport

The highly impressive results at the 1988 Winter Olympic Games in Calgary were judged by Egon Krenz to be the true sports miracle in light of the crumbling state of the country's sports facilities.[37] Krenz, born in 1937, was a member of the inner circle of the SED Politbüro and, since 1983, Central Committee Secretary for Security, Youth and Sport. Among the other problems of what Giselher Spitzer has called a structural crisis since the mid-1980[38] were the ever-fiercer competition from new sporting powers such as China and South Korea and heavier investment in top-level sport by the FRG, the USSR and other traditional rivals. Growing commercialization and professionalism in international sport threatened to undermine the advantages derived by the GDR from its covert professionalism. Compounding these problems was the expansion in the number of Olympic events, thus making it more difficult for the GDR, with its lower demographic and economic potential, to continue focusing on a limited number of medal-rich disciplines. The consequent unscrupulous recourse to experimental and highly powerful performance-enhancing techniques and drugs posed ethical challenges and impeded recruitment from what was a diminishing demographic pool of young talent.

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[36] Günter Roski, "Körperkultur und Sport – fester Bestandteil der sozialistischen Lebensweise der Jugend der DDR: Untersuchung Jugend und Massensport 1987" (Leipzig: Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung, 1987), 27–29, https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de0168-ssoar-400883. About 2,200 persons aged 16 to 35 years were surveyed between June and July 1987 at universities and in industry and agriculture in the Suhl and Gera Administrative Regions (*Bezirke*).

[37] Behörde des/der Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR (hereafter BStU), MfS, ZA, HA XX, no. 15219, "Vermerk," 6 April 1988, 12.

[38] Giselher Spitzer, "Die Strukturkrise der achtziger Jahre," in *Schlüsseldokumente zum DDR-Sport. Ein sporthistorischer Überblick in Originalquellen*, ed. Giselher Spitzer, Hans Joachim Teichler, and Klaus Reinartz (Aachen: Meyer & Meyer, 1998), 247–251, 256.

Elite sport, a voracious monster, required vast sums to support a complex network of organizations, advanced training facilities, thousands of competitors and their entourages of trainers, sports scientists, technical experts and medical practitioners. The backbone of the system was the pyramidal system for the identification and development of youthful talent comprising Training Centres at the base, the pivotal Children's and Youth Sports Schools (*Kinder- und Jugendsportschulen*, KJS) and, at the apex, elite sports clubs such as SC Dynamo Berlin. A precise costing of the system is impossible not only on account of its sheer size and complexity but also due to covert funding of clubs by industrial enterprises and SED regional elites. The vast Stasi surveillance network of informers and full-time staff also needs to be taken into account. But the generous financial allocations by state bodies are known, and they were not to the liking of finance and economic planning experts, notably Gerhard Schürer, a Politbüro candidate member and chair of the State Planning Commission, and the powerful Politbüro member and economic Czar, Günter Mittag, the SED Central Committee Secretary for the Economy.[39]

Resourcing top-level sport, a reoccurring battle between key figures in sport, politics and finance throughout the 1970s and 1980s, came to a head in the economic gloom of the late 1980s. The dire economic situation was encapsulated in the heavy hard currency indebtedness as communicated by Gerhard Schürer and other finance experts to Honecker in September 1989 and, with no action being taken, to his successor Egon Krenz in the following month, with the prognosis that the debt would soar to about 57 billion Valuta Marks.[40] The plight of the economy and the heavy subsidization of education, rents, housing, sport and other areas of social policy formed the background to the negotiations over investment in elite sport in the Politbüro high-performance sports directive of 1989 and the Grundlinie 2000. The former concerned the aims and requirements for the 1992 Summer and the 1994 Winter Olympics and the latter the organization and financing of the development of elite sport until the year 2000.

In discussions over the 1989 high-performance sports directive the State Planning Commission, for the first time, removed elite sport's privileged position in the state investment plan, rejected the sports leadership's request for additional staff and reduced its demand for 471 million GDR Marks between

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[39] See the interview with Gerhard Schürer and his deputy Siegfried Wenzel in *Der Plan als Befehl und Fiktion. Wirtschaftsführung in der DDR. Gespräche und Analysen*, ed. Theo Pirker, M. Rainer Lepsius, and Hans-Hermann Hertle (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), 73–74, 78.

[40] Mike Dennis, *Social and Economic Modernization in Eastern Germany from Honecker to Kohl* (London: Pinter Publishers, and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 27–30.

1991 and 1995 to 238 million GDR Marks.[41] Hitherto, the top rung of the elite sports system, Tier 1, had been accustomed to inexorable growth rates of more than five per cent, sometimes as high as ten per cent. Such deep cuts were incompatible with the Politbüro goal – as finalized in its directive of January 1989 – for the GDR to remain one of the top three sports nations. Retrenchment would have entailed a reduction in the size of elite squads and a serious fall in investment in medal-garnering sports such as swimming and track and field as well as in sports medicine and sports science. Krenz, wearing his political hat, persuaded the Politbüro, with Honecker's decisive support, to reduce the State Planning Commission's cuts to 348.7 million GDR Marks.

Clinging obdurately to success in global sport as a form of soft power and for the promotion of regime stability entailed an addiction to the notorious state doping programme and condoning the search for 'wonder' substances at a time when, as is discussed below, questions were being raised by parents about the harms to children caught up in the doping trap. All the various machinations, plans and calculations were to no avail as escalating costs closed off the urgent modernization and construction of new sports facilities and terminated the heavy subsidization of top-level sport. The aspiration of the new DTSB leader Klaus Eichler, who replaced the highly unpopular Ewald as the organization's president in 1988, to downsize the elite sports system and to counter rising popular criticism of the neglect of mass sport by expanding facilities in tennis, skateboarding, ice skating and other sports would prove too hesitant and far too late.[42]

Mass Sport: The Poor Relation

In 1969, the radical division of sport into two tiers greatly disadvantaged mass sport as the upper echelon benefited from much higher levels of state funding in keeping with the target of raising the GDR to the apex of world sport. The restructuring was a decisive victory for proponents of the primacy of elite sport against those who, in the late 1950s and 1960s, advocated a balance between the two spheres or, at least, an equitable allocation for mass sport. While sports in Tier 1, such as athletics, swimming, gymnastics and rowing were lavishly endowed as they promised a rich haul of medals, those in what became known as

[41] For further details, see Hans Joachim Teichler, "Staatsplan ohne 'Sportobjektive'. Anmerkungen zur wirtschaftlichen Talfahrt," in *Goldkinder. Die DDR im Spiegel ihres Spitzensports*, ed. Grit Hartmann (Leipzig: Forum Verlag, 1998), 243–245; Spitzer, "Die Strukturkrise," 255, 286–288.

[42] Giselher Spitzer, "Machtkämpfe. Anfang und Ende der Lex Ewald 1955–1989," in *Goldkinder. Die DDR im Spiegel ihres Spitzensports*, ed. Grit Hartmann (Leipzig: Forum Verlag, 1998), 277–281.

Tier 2 from 1971 onwards had considerably less financial support and therefore fewer opportunities to access facilities and to recruit highly qualified trainers and medical experts. Talented athletes were delegated towards Tier 1 sports, not to those in Tier 2 such as tennis, table tennis, fishing and motor sports.[43] The allocation of state funding indicates the chasm between elite and mass sport: in February 1990, the DTSB executive revealed that 62.8 per cent of funding was channelled into the upper echelon and only 37.2 per cent into the lower rung, not one in four GDR Marks as previously indicated.[44] Such a disproportionate allocation of resources undermined the SED claim that high participation in mass sport was a defining feature of the country's sports system.

While mass sport was seriously underfunded and the 'virtuous circle' of mass and elite sport little more than fiction, non-Olympic sports attached to DTSB sports associations like fishing and bowling managed to attract tens of thousands of enthusiasts as did country-wide sports programmes with millions of participants such as *Eile mit Meile*, a state response to the jogging movement in the West, and the Joint Sports Programme of the DTSB, FDGB and FDJ with its key insignia "Ready to Defend the Homeland". The international Peace Race through Eastern Europe and activities under the umbrella of enterprise sports groups also enjoyed widespread appeal. That said, top athletes' preferential access to goods supplied by Western firms, shortages of sports equipment and the poor state of facilities aroused widespread popular ire. A selection of statistics illustrates the seriousness of the problem. In 1992, the *Deutscher Sportbund* (German Sports Confederation) reported on the desolate state of East German sports buildings and venues: in percentage terms, only 11.3 of sports fields, 10.6 of gymnasia, 17.5 of sports halls and 8.6 of outdoor swimming pools were in a usable condition. The costs of modernization and renovation over a period of fifteen years would, it was estimated, amount to at least 25 billion Deutsche Marks.[45]

Sports fans frequently had recourse to *Eingaben* or citizen petitions to vent their frustration and anger with deficiencies in the provision of sports goods and the availability of facilities. The DTSB was the favoured target of petitioners. As

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[43] Klaus Reinartz, "Die Zweiteilung des DDR-Sports auf Beschluß der SED," in Teichler and Reinartz, *Das Leistungssportsystem*, 63–68.

[44] Ibid., 73, 77.

[45] Hans-Dieter Krebs, "Die politische Instrumentalisierung des Sports in der DDR," in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission 'Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland'*, vol. III/2, ed. Deutscher Bundestag (Baden-Baden: Nomos, and Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 1353–1354.

the 1980s progressed, a vesuvian flow of complaints concerning inefficiencies and inequalities not only in sport but in wider society poured into the offices of state and SED leaders such as Krenz, Honecker, Mielke, Erbach and Ewald. In statistical terms, almost every East German household took advantage of their constitutional right to submit a petition between 1949 and 1989 and to receive a response within one month; by the mid-1980s, over one million petitions, with perceptibly less deference, were being submitted each year to an overwhelmed bureaucracy.[46] Petitions focused on the poor quality of housing, inadequacies in health provision, restrictions on travel abroad, emigration to West Germany and consumer goods shortages. The breakdown in trust and the seriousness of the socio-economic crisis is evidenced in the sharp rise in *Eingaben* to the Council of State, from about 59,000 in 1985 to a new height of almost 135,000 in 1988.[47]

Complaints homing in on sport in the 1980s frequently intertwine the material everyday with the fracturing of the fragile social consensus erected on the unity of social and economic policy and on the alleged virtuous circle of mass and elite sport. This intersection is palpable in the frequency of complaints about footwear, not simply ordinary running shoes but also specialist items such as walking, ski and mountain boots, and handball and basketball training shoes. An *Eingabe* from a Berliner in May 1983 highlighted the hollowness of official pronouncements on the value of mass sport when citizens, or so it was claimed, had to run in bare feet, climb without ropes and go on biking trips without cycles.[48] In the same year, a petitioner from Dresden protested to Ewald that he did not simply want to read about the success of sports policy in the newspapers but rather to experience it himself by being able to acquire running shoes.[49] In an earlier petition to the DTSB, he had poured scorn on the notion of the GDR as a sports nation and its garnering of gold medals while neglecting the true sports festival of the nation comprising enthusiastic amateur runners that turned out in their thousands for the GutsMuths and other race meetings.[50]

While the complaint procedure was part of state policy to identify sources of conflict and, optimistically, to pacify complainants, the increasingly sharp and

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[46] Betts, *Within Walls*, 189–191.
[47] Beatrix Bouvier, *Die DDR – ein Sozialstaat? Sozialpolitik in der Ära Honecker* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 2002), 320–327.
[48] Hans Joachim Teichler, "Konfliktlinien des Sportalltags. Eingaben zum Thema Sport," in Teichler, *Sport in der DDR*, 543.
[49] Ibid., 538.
[50] Ibid., 539.

open critique of the 1980s, as in these three petitions, show a political culture with elements of defiance and protest. On occasions, complaints turned into overt criticism of political corruption and repression in sport, thereby further undermining the soft-power legitimation strategy of the SED. This is evident in the flood of local protests and *Eingaben* from Dresden Dynamo fans in 1981 concerning the banning of the club's star footballers Peter Kotte and Matthias Müller from playing in the two top flights in connection with plans by their colleague Gerd Weber to flee the GDR. Weber was banned from all forms of football and spent nine months in jail; ironically, he was a Stasi informer.[51]

Complaints rained in from East Berlin, Dresden, Potsdam and Leipzig, about top athletes' privileged access to training centres and swimming pools, thus reinforcing negative views on the disparity between mass and elite sport.[52] The difficulties in using swimming pools and sports halls were a reflection of the parlous state of the construction industry, especially in the late 1980s, which restricted the construction of much-needed costly facilities in elite sport and led to a serious deterioration in the condition of the building infrastructure across all sports.[53] The contradiction in SED propaganda for greater participation in sport and the shortage of sports-related goods was admitted internally in a letter from the DTSB department for the economy to one of the organization's vice-presidents in late 1980: "We are already short of around 700,000 pairs of running shoes. That is, around 1 million citizens will try – in vain – to get running shoes and then moan about our propaganda advocating running and health."[54]

In replying to petitioners, DTSB staff often had to admit to serious shortages but tried to sweeten the pill by holding out hope for an eventual improvement. The state's inability to provide for mass sport was conceded by the State Secretary for Physical Culture and Sport, Günter Erbach, in response, albeit as late as December 1989, to a petitioner from Leipzig lamenting the lack of opportunities for sport in the local residential area and school. Erbach openly acknowledged that investment in buildings, primarily for top-level sport, had seriously disadvantaged mass sport and that a fundamental policy reappraisal was required. This was a nettle that had not been grasped soon enough.[55]

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[51] McDougall, *The People's Game*, 135–140.
[52] Fetzer, "Die gesellschaftliche Akzeptanz," 337–338.
[53] Hans Joachim Teichler, "Sportstättenbau in den 80er Jahren," in Teichler and Reinartz, *Das Leistungssportsystem*, 351–356.
[54] Cited in Mike Dennis and Jonathan Grix, *Sport under Communism. Behind the East German "Sports Miracle"* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 163.
[55] Teichler, "Staatsplan," 248.

Erbach's admission had been preceded in an attack on SED sports policy by New Forum shortly before the Berlin Wall fell. Its critique constituted a confluence of the grievances expressed in an uncoordinated manner in *Eingaben* with a public voice that embedded these complaints in a radical attack on one-party dictatorship. New Forum had emerged during the course of 1989 as the main political opposition group from among the many small citizens' groups around the alternative political culture concerned with human rights, gender issues, environmental degradation and peace in the later years of the GDR. Closely monitored and penetrated by Stasi informers, they were deemed to be 'hostile-negative'. In December 1989, New Forum's working group for sport excoriated elite sport as a shiny façade that covered up corruption and misuse of office by the dictatorship of a small political clique and as a means for polishing the image of the GDR despite the inordinate cost. In light of participation rates in sport falling far below those in developed industrial nations and the acute shortages of sports goods, it poured scorn on the assertion that a small group of elite athletes emerge from the millions who practise sport on a regular basis. The very existence of popular sports activities, it continued, owed far less to the SED than to the many hardworking volunteer trainers, referees, administrators and medical practitioners. In conclusion, it urged a separation of sport and SED, a reduction in the financial burden of elite sport and a clarification of the moral, ethical and financial misdemeanours in sport, including doping with anabolic steroids.[56]

Growing Popular Disenchantment with Elite Sport

Although many sources, including *Eingaben*, testify to an appreciation of the achievements of GDR athletes in international sport, the intractable problems of reconciling the competing demands for resources from mass sport fuelled a growing disenchantment with elite sport and its political overseers in the final decade of the Honecker era. Drawing on viewing figures for GDR television sports programmes, Thomas Fetzer has identified a correlation between television consumption and fluctuations in enthusiasm. Global success attracted a large audience between 1973 and 1976 and continued at a high rate before dropping from the mid-1980s onwards.[57] The slackening of enthusiasm may,

[56] Neues Forum Leipzig: Arbeitsgruppe Sport, "Zur Ethik und Moral des Sports," 4 December 1989, doping-archiv.de, accessed 4 March 2024.
[57] Fetzer, "Die gesellschaftliche Akzeptanz," 284–291, 299–302, 347–350.

in part, be attributed to the satiation with continual success but also because the material and human costs of elite sport were becoming ever more apparent. This aligns with what Jan Haut and colleagues have called the diminishing utility for national pride of every additional Olympic medal. On the basis of research around the Rio 2016 Olympics, they claim that whereas a single gold may strongly increase international attention, more frequent winning may lead to inflation and that perceptions are not simply shaped by success but also strongly by doping and other forms of unfairness or arrogance.[58]

Further support for the thesis of declining enthusiasm can be found in the rates of refusal by parents for their children's entry into a Children's and Youth Sports School after the end of three years at one of the many Training Centres. Parental consent was required for delegation to a KJS; it could not be taken for granted. Regarded as one of the crucial components of the GDR 'sports miracle', the KJS system was shrouded in secrecy and kept under close surveillance by the Stasi. In 1989, over 9,000 children attended one of these schools, with two-thirds as boarders. They underwent an intensive and highly demanding training regime, usually in conjunction with one of the elite Sports Clubs, with the ultimate goal of entry into the ranks of the 3,376 national squad members. Reaching the summit brought many potential benefits: a place in higher education, opportunities to travel abroad, privileged access to an apartment, cars and other goods in short supply, financial bonuses for victories in individual and team events, status enhancement as a performer on the world stage, and the satisfaction and enjoyment derived from competitive sport. Such benefits help explain why the system continued to attract high rates of participation until the collapse of SED hegemony, perhaps a small way of saying 'yes'.

Yet the many drawbacks caused great concern among parents for the well-being of their children in the hothouse of talent development and one in which the majority youngsters were ultimately cast aside. Numerous studies were carried out in the GDR, for example, by the Leipzig University for Physical Culture and Sport, which identified the problematic aspects of children's experiences and how these might be rectified to ensure a smoother functioning of the system.[59]

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[58] Jan Haut, Freya Grassmann, Eike Emrich, Tim Mayer, and Christian Pierdzioch, "Heroes at Home, Suspects Abroad? National and International Perceptions of Elite Sport Success," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 37, no. 2 (2020): 133–142, doi: 10.1123/ssj.2018-0157.

[59] Among key studies, whose distribution was restricted to internal use, are: Lotti Baum and Brigitte Reinhardt, "Aufgaben bei der Leitung des Übergangs zur 2. Förderstufe und bei der Leitung des Erziehungs- und Ausbildungsprozesses im Aufbautraining," *Theorie und Praxis des Leistungssports* 20, no. 6 (1982): 22–37; Klaus Rudolph, "Die Einstellung der Eltern zur Belastung der Schüler

This downside of the 'sports miracle' involved: homesickness and separation from the family; a lack of free time; the intense pressures of juggling studies with onerous training schedules; intensive political socialization to produce model socialist personalities; serious risks to mental and physical health; the negative effect of ejection from the system and reintegration into society; overspecialization in a sports discipline; and the intrusion into the private sphere of family and friends by the Stasi. One citizen openly complained about the rejection of a place at a special school because of family relations in the West.[60] Parents' concerns were particularly strong as regards disciplines with a low entry age, such as ice skating and gymnastics, and those closely associated with injury and chronic physical harms, notably boxing, weightlifting, wrestling, luge and ski jumping.[61]

While recruitment to the KJS system was a constant problem for sports planners, the issue became critical during the 1980s and can be related both to the structural crisis in elite sport and wider societal changes. A declining birth rate between 1965 and 1975 and only a modest rise from 1975 onwards resulted in a shortfall in potential recruits and a search for new ways to enhance performance. Recourse was had to heavier training loads and the widespread doping of KJS pupils, both extremely harmful to the health of the youngsters. Even though rigorous efforts were made to keep them in the dark about what substances they were receiving, knowledge about the doping of minors and top athletes and potential side-effects circulated among East Germans via Western TV, the internal grapevine and rumours, and sometimes by youngsters informing their parents.[62] Wiese has shown that the relentless pursuit of medals after the 1972 Munich Olympics led to a sharp rise in the number of minors doped in a frenzy of experimentation and in an uncontrolled manner. At the beginning of the 1980s, planners extended doping to top performers in almost all disciplines at the sports schools.[63]

A change in attitude by parents to elite sport and delegation to a KJS is traceable since the end of the 1970s but especially since the mid-1980s.[64] According to Wiese, the incidence of rejection by parents of a place for their

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an den Kinder- und Jugendsportschulen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Tagesregimes," *Theorie und Praxis des Leistungssports* 12, no. 8 (1974): 47–66.

60 Fetzer, "Die gesellschaftliche Akzeptanz," 344.

61 Ibid., 314–328; Wiese, *Kaderschmieden*, 500–501, 505–512; Grit Hartmann, "Wie das Gold geschmiedet wurde," in *Goldkinder. Die DDR im Spiegel ihres Spitzensports*, ed. Grit Hartmann (Leipzig: Forum Verlag, 1998), 117–126; Baum and Reinhardt, "Aufgaben," 24–28, 34–36.

62 Fetzer, "Die gesellschaftliche Akzeptanz," 322, 327–328.

63 Wiese, *Kaderschmieden*, 477–483, 552.

64 Ibid., 498–499, 505–506, 515.

children at a KJS rose sharply with a consequent loss of talent of 11.4 per cent and 9.6 per cent in 1984 and 1985 respectively.[65] A survey undertaken in 1989 revealed that only 56 per cent of parents and 63 per cent of minors at a Training Centre regarded a KJS place as worth striving for.[66] A caveat is in order, however: rejection of a KJS place fell in 1988 to 6.7 per cent, partly because of greater external pressure on parents and also because quantity was put before quality to compensate for the shortfall. Yet this development could not disguise the disconnection between parents and the value of a KJS placement. Once again, *Eingaben* provide an insight into the negative stance of so many parents. In a petition by members of the Irmler family to a DTSB Regional Executive in 1980, the many difficulties intrinsic to elite sport were conceded but not the inhumanity and callousness of those in positions of responsibility.[67] This encapsulates the ethical crisis of the elite sports system, one which subsequent research and the testimonies of victims have so movingly revealed from experiences of sexual and emotional abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder and other serious long-term health problems.[68]

Agency in Sport: From Skateboarding to Football

The disillusionment with mass sport provision, negativity towards the KJS system, cynicism about the manipulation of football in favour of Mielke's Dynamo Berlin and broader cultural changes all spurred a shift towards independent sports activities. Windsurfing, skateboarding and other autonomous free-time pursuits sprang from grassroots agency and from an attraction to trend sports, many of which spread from the USA and West Germany, thereby defying the

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65 Ibid., 506, 514.

66 Hartmann, "Wie das Gold," 125, 336.

67 Wiese, *Kaderschmieden*, 514.

68 Joseph Tudor, *Synthetic Medals. East German Athletes' Journey to Hell* (Chichester: Pitch Publishing, 2022), 93–107, 186–198; Hans-Joachim Seppelt and Holger Schück, eds., *Anklage: Kinderdoping. Das Erbe des DDR-Sports* (Berlin: Tenea, 1999); Harold J. Freyberger, Jens Netzker, Simon Buhrmann, Anne Drescher, Ines Geipel, Adrian Gallist, and Jochen Buhrmann, "Traumatische Folgen des DDR-Staatsdopings. Erste Ergebnisse aus einem multimodalen Untersuchungsansatz," *Trauma und Gewalt* 12, no. 2 (2018): 116–123; Bettina Rulofs, Katrin Wahnschaffe-Waldhoff, Marilen Neeten, and Annika Söllinger, „Sexualisierte Gewalt und sexueller Kindesmissbrauch im Kontext des Sports. Auswertung der vertraulichen Anhörungen und schriftlichen Berichte der Unabhängigen Kommission zur Aufarbeitung sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs" (Berlin: Unabhängige Kommission zur Aufarbeitung sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs, 2022), especially 137–146. Child abuse in GDR swimming is interrogated in a novel by Anne Lauppe-Dunbar, *Dark Mermaids* (Bridgend: Seren, 2015).

binaries and priorities underpinning the official state sports system with its emphasis on international success, strict performance norms and ideological rectitude. Among other sports with a grassroots base were karate, triathlon, bodybuilding, aerobics, track running in the Thuringian Forest, mountaineering in the Soviet Union and rock climbing in Saxon Switzerland.

The SED and DTSB responded in diverse ways to what were mostly minor sports with a small base of enthusiasts: from outright repression by the Stasi to a reluctant and capricious tolerance and a drive to incorporate the groups into the formal organizational structures of the DTSB. In the ongoing battle for freedom of action, some enthusiasts like the rock climbers resisted DTSB plans to incorporate them into state frameworks, whereas the track running organization in Thuringia proved less resilient. A common practice of the authorities to prevent ideological 'contamination' from Western-linked sports was to create new titles such as *Körperkulturistik* for bodybuilding, a terminological shield that failed to deter enthusiasts.[69]

As is discussed below in connection with the agency of football and motor cycling fans and their myriad encounters across socialist and 'imperialist' state borders, these developments, above all in the 1980s, contributed to the melting of the Marxist-Leninist ideological glue that permeated state socialism and to the increasing porosity of the so-called 'anti-fascist' barrier of the Berlin Wall and the broader protective inter-systemic Iron Curtain. This can be interpreted as a way of saying 'no' to arbitrary restrictions on the freedom of travel and on the space for 'doing one's own thing'; these were among the negative aspects of GDR state socialism regularly identified in opinion polling by Infratest and in data compiled by GDR research institutes and pertinent to the fortunes of enthusiasts in informally organized sports such as karate and skateboarding.

A few youthful skateboarders appeared in East Berlin in the mid- to late-1970s; by the close of the 1980s, numbers had increased across the country to about 200 to 300. Closely associated with the American hippie and hip-hop scene and inspired by the Harry Belafonte cult film *Beat Street*, skateboarding established itself in the GDR via West German contacts, especially West Berlin's skate shop, California Sports, that provided information about style and techniques and advice on the construction of boards.[70] As skateboards from the West

[69] Braun, "The People's Sport?" 419–420.

[70] See, above all, Kai Reinhart, "'Concrete Carving on the Berlin Wall'. Skateboarding in East Germany," in *Skateboard Studies*, ed. Konstantin Butz and Christian Peters (London: Koening Books, 2018), 130–150, and Kai Reinhart, "Sport in der Bio-Macht – eine Analyse unterschiedlicher Elemente des Sports im Lichte der Theorien Michel Foucaults," in *Körperführung. Historische Pers-*

were so expensive, East German enthusiasts had to construct their own or seek out second hand ones. Another source of materials and information was Czechoslovakia, where skateboarding benefited from state support and where East Germans could take part in international events such as the Prague Euroskates in the late 1980s.

Unafraid to appear in public in East Berlin, the centre of skateboarding in the GDR, as well as in Dresden, Erfurt and Leipzig, the skateboarders were embedded in the punk scene and other autonomous youth sub-cultures but kept their distance from the mutually antagonistic skinheads. Strongly independent, they fiercely resisted incorporation into the official state sports system with its emphasis on discipline and commitment to SED goals. SED and state organs, antipathetic to the sport's cultural roots in the USA, to the personal links between East and West German skaters and to their challenging appearances in public, deployed police to keep the skaters off the streets and, on occasions, Stasi officers to clamp down on public contests. Despite multiple restrictions, East Berlin skaters staged contests that attracted participants across the GDR and from West Germany between 1987 and 1989. Although numbers were modest, no more than 30 participants at the 1989 contest and predominantly from East and West Berlin, one West Berliner has hailed the event as a historic turning point: "Actually, this was already a unified Berlin, a Berlin where, as a consequence of skateboarding, the Wall no longer existed".[71] This argument only gains traction, however, when similar developments in football, karate and various niche sports are borne in mind.

Karate,[72] although a martial art with cultural roots in East Asia, was denounced by officialdom as a 'murderous' capitalist sport and frowned upon for enticing talented athletes from Olympic sports such as judo, boxing and wrestling.[73] Shodan Axel Dziersk, born in East Berlin in 1950, was the inspiration

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pektiven auf das Verhältnis von Biopolitik und Sport, ed. Stefan Scholl (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2018), 226–238.

[71] Interview with Volker Graetsch, February 2005, in Reinhart, "'Concrete Carving,'" 143.

[72] The main source is Repmann, "Die konfliktreiche Entwicklung," 501–531. See also Braun, "The People's Sport?" 421–423; Anje Rödekamp, "Karate in der DDR – Training im Verborgenen," Karate Dachverband Nordrhein-Westfalen, 7 January 2025, https://karate.nrw/karate-in-der-ddr-training-im-verborgenen; "Axel Dziersk: 'Karate-Kid' der DDR," *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk*, 7 April 2020, https://www.mdr.de/geschichte/ddr/politik-gesellschaft/sport/karate-axel-dziersk-100.html; Felix Liedtke, "Die Entwicklung des Karate in den letzten Jahren der DDR bis heute," 2010, https://kipf.com/die-entwicklung-des-karate-in-den-letzten-jahren-der-ddr-bis-heute, accessed 19 August 2024; Lars Andersen, "The East German Samurai," *Karate News* (9 December 2021), https://karatenews.dk/the-east-german-Samurai.

[73] Repmann, "Die konfliktreiche Entwicklung," 506–507.

behind the development of karate in the GDR from the 1970s onwards. Despite being kept under surveillance by forty-four Stasi informers,[74] he popularized karate moves as a stuntman, along with other enthusiasts, in TV and cinema films and acted as a contact person for information about the sport.[75] Alarmed by its growing popularity, the DTSB banned karate, as well as yoga, in 1979, driving the small, informal groups underground into cellars, attics and other clandestine training places.

Yet it was easier to issue than to enforce the ban for, despite the close attention of the Stasi, numbers increased to at least 2,280 by late 1988.[76] Illegal regional groups were established, and training manuals and other forbidden literature were obtained from the West, often by means of senior-age family members such as Dziersk's mother. On occasions, university students formed small martial arts groups, sometimes, as at Halle, inspired by the activities of fellow students from Vietnam.[77] Activists even managed to arrange for trainers from West Germany to cross into the GDR, notably a visit in 1985 by Sensei Hideo Ochi, a Japanese master of karate and trainer to the West German national team.[78] As in other sports, exchanges took place with karateka in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where the sport was not banned. Karate also penetrated the football scene, where skinhead supporters of Dynamo Berlin engaged in karate, partly in preparation for clashes with opposing fans.

Although some members of the armed and security forces practised karate on their own initiative before elements of the sport were incorporated into hand-to-hand combat training programmes of special units,[79] intermittent repression continued throughout the 1980s. In 1987, a major training course at Ahlbeck was banned and the organizers imprisoned by the Wolgast police office.[80] There is evidence, however, that by the mid-1980s many karate activists were becoming bolder, a feature observable in other sports. Petitions, sometimes as part of an organized campaign, were despatched to the offices of Ewald, Krenz and Honecker seeking the legalization of the sport, with attention being drawn to the legality of karate in Poland and Czechoslovakia. In 1987–1988, Krenz was

[74] "Axel Dziersk," 1.
[75] Repmann, "Die konfliktreiche Entwicklung," 504–505, 508.
[76] Ibid., 509, fn. 29. Repmann argues that numbers were certainly higher than this figure.
[77] Theo Austermühle, *Vom Studentensport zum Hochschulsport* (Aachen: Meyer and Meyer, 2000), 16, 21, 99–103.
[78] Andersen, "The East-German Samurai," 7–9.
[79] Repmann, "Die konfliktreiche Entwicklung," 516–519.
[80] Ibid., 510–513. Other training courses had been held at Seebad Ahlbeck on the island of Usedom in 1985 that attracted well over 100 participants from across the GDR.

the recipient of *Eingaben* from a group complaining about the lack of state support and being made to feel like criminals, charges which triggered meetings and numerous letters between officials and group members.[81] Petitioners even resorted to thinly veiled threats: in an *Eingabe* addressed to Honecker in July 1987, Hilmar Ortleb contended that by refusing to legalize the sport, the state would lose any chance of controlling it; he underpinned his demand by pointing out that while 600 practitioners owned illegal weapons [with reference to karate], the state did not even know the names of ten per cent.[82] The ban on karate was finally lifted in February 1989, soon after Klaus Eichler replaced Ewald as head of the DTSB. Although activists could now practise openly and, on 25 October, hold their first GDR tournament in Leipzig, the sport was placed under the organizational umbrella of the Judo Association. This and other restrictions underline officialdom's distrust of autonomous cultural forms, in this case from the Far East, and of its prioritization of elite sport.

If minority niche sports such as karate, skateboarding and triathlon could defy the imposition of the values and structures of SED and DTSB, then football culture and club traditions presented an even greater challenge to authoritarian dictates. The game's mass appeal, its sheer unpredictability and its strong cultural significance at local, regional and national level enabled football to attain a degree of autonomy and to accommodate low levels of resistance that sometimes erupted into violence. In addition, the magnetic appeal of *Bundesliga* clubs and the frequency of personal contacts between East and West German fans across the Berlin Wall and in neighbouring state socialist countries testified to the prevalence of agency in football and to the emasculation of SED efforts to create a distinctive GDR identity.

The cultural significance of football and its roots in diverse individual and collective identities can be gauged from the generous sponsorship of local teams by high-ranking SED and government officials as well as by heads of large industrial complexes such as the Carl Zeiss Optics conglomerate. The most notorious example of high-level patronage was that of the Minister of State Security, Erich Mielke, for his favourite team Berlin Football Club Dynamo (henceforth Dynamo Berlin). The ten-year run of success of his team as Oberliga champions from 1979 onwards deeply antagonized fans of rival clubs, not least those of the well-supported Dynamo Dresden. Not only was there a clash of regional affiliations in the latter instance – a case of Prussia versus

[81] Ibid., 519–524; Dennis and Grix, *Sport under Communism*, 75–76.
[82] Repmann, "Die konfliktreiche Entwicklung," 521–522; Braun, "The People's Sport?" 422–423.

Saxony – but also the widespread view that Dynamo Berlin's success owed much to dubious decisions by so-called 'bent' referees, its superior training facilities, its links with the Stasi and its arbitrary recruitment of players from other clubs.[83] Research conducted in 1987 by the Leipzig Central Institute for Youth Research found that it was by far the most unpopular club in the country, followed at some distance by Union Berlin. Union's low rating was attributed to an aversion against the city of Berlin and to the team's rough playing style. In contrast, Lok Leipizig, Carl Zeiss Jena and Dynamo Dresden and Magdeburg recorded high rates of approval.[84]

Letters of complaints poured in from officials and countless supporters of other clubs, especially, according to Leske, in 1985–1986.[85] Accusations, often from SED members, focused on decisions favouring the East Berliners with regard to offside, penalties, additional playing time, fouls and player dismissals. A Zwickau fan protested to Ewald about manipulation, deceit and daylight robbery in the upper tier of the league[86] and a fan from Dresden warned Honecker in 1985 that poor decision making damaged the reputation of the SED, the capital city and sports functionaries among young people.[87] The visceral antipathy to Mielke's club and referees was expressed in dramatic manner in an anonymous letter to the East German Football Association from a self-styled circle of terrorists; referees were threatened with damage to their bungalows, cars and garages if they did not cease manipulating results in favour of Dynamo.[88]

Mielke did not respond well to criticism. In a briefing paper for a meeting with Ewald and Rudi Hellmann, the head of the Central Committee Sports Department, on 31 March 1986, he protested against the unjustified 'hate-filled mood' against his team and warned that Oberliga games and referees' performances should not be misused by 'hostile-negative, politically indifferent,

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[83] For a detailed analysis, see Leske, *Erich Mielke*, 468–546.

[84] "S6096: Jugend und Sport 1987," Codebuch (DJI-Studien-nr.: A46), 1.0.0, 2010-04-13, GESIS Datenarchiv, doi: 10.4232/1.6096, A46 0212, A46 0221, accessed 27 August 2024; Hans-Jörg Stiehler, "Neuere Ergebnisse zum Verhältnis Jugendlicher zum Fußball (Fanverhalten): Expertise zur Untersuchung 'Sport 87'," ZIJ Leipzig, 1988, 2, 10–13, https://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-402772. On the international scene, the national teams of the Federal Republic, Brazil, Argentina, Denmark and the Soviet Union were highly popular and among club teams, above all Bayern Munich and, to a lesser extent, Hamburg: see ibid., 7–10. 2,606 young people took part in the research project.

[85] Leske, *Erich Mielke,* 497.

[86] Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BArchiv), DY 12/3341, Letter to Ewald, 27 September 1982.

[87] Leske, *Erich Mielke*, 498.

[88] The letter, dated January 1982, is printed in Suckut, ed., *Volkes Stimmen*, 320–321.

politically ill-advised and malleable forces' to drive a wedge between the people and the police and security forces.[89] While there is no evidence of direct instructions from Mielke's ministry for referees to favour the Berlin team, popular perceptions of bias were decisive and reflected alienation from the game and reinforced belief in endemic corruption in society as in football.

Much to the chagrin of the Dynamo Sports Association leadership, the hostility towards the Berlin team was not confined to letters of protest but was expressed openly in football stadia and surrounding areas. This echoes what Robert Edelman has called a small way of saying 'no' in the Soviet Union to a club attached to the army or police, as in the case of ordinary people's support for Moscow Spartak rather than the elitist Moscow Dynamo[90] and it is not untypical of stadia as places of contestation and protest in other authoritarian regimes.[91] Highly provocative cries in East German stadia of "Bent champions", "Stasi out" and "The fuzz are work shy" encapsulated a widespread disillusionment with a game pervaded by strong political antipathies.

Highly embarrassing for Mielke and his ministerial colleagues was the reaction to the flight of Lutz Eigendorf, one of the stars of Dynamo Berlin, who remained in West Germany after a friendly match against Kaiserslautern in 1979. He died in a motor car accident in 1983, due, it has been alleged – but without sufficient proof – to Stasi machinations. Other Dynamo players, Falz Götz and Dirk Schlegel, would take the escape route to the West. Taunts echoed around the stadia of "Where is Eigendorf?" or "Want to bolt to the West, Dynamo is best". Fans of Union Berlin recall other inflammatory cries: "Scheiß Osten!", a reflection of disgust with the GDR, and, at free kicks, "The wall must go", a less than subtle reference to the Berlin Wall itself.[92] Given the almost universal hostility towards Dynamo, perhaps it might be argued, that it was partly to blame for the fall of the Wall, not just, as the writer and a loyal fan Andreas Gläser contends, a scapegoat for its original construction.[93]

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[89] BStU, MfS, ZA, ZAIG, no. 27057, "Hinweise für die Gesprächsführung mit dem Präsidenten des DTSB, Genossen Ewald, und dem Leiter der Abteilung Sport im ZK der SED, Genossen Hellmann," [March 1986], 2–4.

[90] Robert Edelman, "A Small Way of Saying 'No'": Moscow Working Men, Spartak Soccer and the Communist Party, 1900–1945," *American Historical Review* 107, no. 5 (2002): 1442, doi: 10.1086/ahr/107.5.1441.

[91] For a general survey, see Jean-Michel De Waele, "Introduction: soccer under authoritarian regimes," *Soccer and Society* 21, no. 6 (2020): 1–14, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2020.1775048.

[92] See the interview with Dall in Hahn and Willmann, *Stadionpartisanen*, 88.

[93] Andreas Gläser, *Der BFC war schuld am Mauerbau. Ein stolzer Sohn des Proletariats erzählt* (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 2003).

Union Berlin were Dynamo's fiercest rival and matches were frequently the scene of violence both inside and outside the stadia. Intra-city hostilities were not uncommon, as was the case between Leipzig fans of the underdogs Chemie and those of the far more successful Lok, but none were more deep-rooted than in the capital. In contrast to Dynamo, Union was the proverbial yo-yo team, securing only one major honour, the FDGB cup in 1968. Located on the outskirts of the city, Union commanded a loyal and dedicated set of supporters and a reputation in the 1980s for harbouring punks and other non-conformist youth. The notion of Union as a 'genuine' club in visceral opposition to Dynamo was fundamental to its well-cultivated image as underdog, as is encapsulated in the post-unification remarks of one supporter, Lopez: "We stood in the shadow of the pigs of BFC, Stasi, police and Mielke and were always the downtrodden team. I don't even find it cool to be number one".[94] Although a culture of defiance was palpable, it would be mistaken to depict Union as a club in opposition to the state socialist system. It belonged to the high-performance group of football clubs created in 1966 and was sponsored by the state-owned Oberspree Cable Plant. What Union represented, however, was a strong identification with the local working-class suburb of Köpenick and a space for fan behaviour incompatible with that of the all-round socialist personality nurtured by SED political educationalists.

The return of Union Berlin to the Oberliga in 1970 and the seriousness of clashes with Dynamo fans turned what had been mostly low-key and ritualistic violence in the past into a broad societal issue and the launching of a Stasi special operation to prevent a reoccurrence of rioting by Union supporters.[95] Despite this operation and a plethora of measures against what the Stasi defined as 'negative-decadent' forces, a labelling that also encompassed skinheads, punks, rock fans and metalheads, 'hooliganism' was far from quelled. The 1980s marked a rapid escalation in widespread football-related violence with a spiralling of state concern and engagement. The most serious offences, whether in Leipzig, East Berlin, Rostock or Dresden, consisted of damage to train coaches, stadia and public facilities and physical assaults on other fans, spectators and passers-by.

From the mid-1980s, the infiltration of the football scene by skinheads inaugurated a shift towards a more militant and racist terrace culture. A common

[94] Jörn Luther and Frank Willmann, *Und niemals vergessen – Eisern Union!* (Berlin: BasisDruck, 2000), 136.
[95] BStU, ZA, HA VIII, no. 925, vol. 14, 6–8, 12–14.

interest in football served as a link not only among skinheads across the GDR but also with those in Hungary, West Germany and Czechoslovakia.[96] The emergence, by the late 1980s, of a hybrid of xenophobia, hyper-nationalism and anti-communism among a section of the skinheads was particularly difficult to explain in a state whose legitimacy was in part founded on its anti-fascist myth. While skinheads were relatively few in number, thirty to forty were attached to the two Berlin clubs in December 1985, a crackdown across the GDR two years later and infiltration by the Stasi failed to crush them. Indeed, the FDGB cup final between Dynamo Berlin and Carl Zeiss Jena in East Berlin in June 1988 was the scene of some of the most serious violence ever witnessed at a GDR football game.[97]

The radicalization of hooliganism prompted the Stasi to increase its efforts to recruit informers among the hard-core and other 'negative-decadent' fans as a means for identifying the leaders and contacts with West German skinheads and hooligans. But, as a dissertation on Lok Leipzig fans compiled by a Stasi officer revealed, recruitment was difficult as material incentives were ineffective and the hard core were dismissive of appeals to socialist convictions and opposed to snitching on their mates.[98] As Stasi officers and criminologists were left bemused in the absence of any direct steering of the skinheads and the hard-core fans by 'imperialist' agencies, the ministry fell back on the convenient but ultimately misconceived notion of political-ideological subversion in the form of Western media transmissions, postal networks and the many personal links between East and West German fans across state borders.

Lifting the Curtain, Lowering the Wall

A regular flow of personal contacts across borders hitherto protected by fortifications and by stringent passport regimes became a common feature of Cold War Europe from the early 1970s in the wake of a series of international accords. Among the major agreements affecting the GDR were the Four Power

[96] BStU, ZA, HA XX, no. 898, "Einschätzung über die in der DDR existierenden Skinheads bzw. Skinheadgruppen," East Berlin, 16 December 1987, 27–29.

[97] BStU, ZA, JHS, no. 21493, Rainer Taraschoneck, "Diplomarbeit zum Thema: Erfordernisse der Erziehung und Befähigung von inoffiziellen Mitarbeitern (IM) zur operativen Bearbeitung von rechtsextremistischen Erscheinigungen unter Jugendlichen der Hauptstadt," 1989, 14; also BStU, ZA, HA IX, no. 1303, "Informationen," 69–70.

[98] BStU, ZA, JHS, 21466, Dirk Kreklau, "Diplomarbeit zum Thema: Die Gewinnung Jugendlicher und jungerwachsener IM aus dem negativ-dekadenten Fußballanhang und die kontinuierliche Zusammenarbeit mit ihnen," Leipzig, 31 March 1989, 5, 13, 18–24, 29, 31–33, 36.

Agreement on Berlin and the Basic Treaty between the two German Republics in 1972. While the Basic Treaty was a landmark agreement, it did not entail full or *de jure* recognition of GDR sovereignty and Bonn continued to promote the concept of two states in one nation and to recognize the right to citizenship of East Germans settling in the FRG. The SED response, as part of its general *Abgrenzung* or demarcation strategy from the Federal Republic, was the unrolling of its highly contentious thesis of the development of the socialist nation in the GDR primarily on the basis of socialist conditions of production, Marxist-Leninist ideology and the political power of the working class under its Marxist-Leninist party. Not the least of the many challenges arising from the amelioration in relations was an enormous surge in private East-West German connections and entanglements. In 1973, over 6 million visits were paid by West Germans and West Berliners to the GDR in contrast to the 1.25 million only two years earlier. East German senior citizens were by far the greatest beneficiaries on the GDR side with visits escalating to 3.8 million and 6.7 million in 1987 and 1988 respectively.

While it was virtually impossible for East Germans, other than seniors, to attend matches in the Federal Republic, Westerners were free to cross the border to follow games in the GDR capital.[99] Although the construction of the Berlin Wall severed attendance by Easterners at Hertha Berlin home games, contacts between Union and Hertha fans remained close with East Berlin members of the small Hertha-Eastern society holding clandestine meetings at pubs in the Pankow and Prenzlauer Berg districts. Perhaps the most remarkable of these fans was Helmut Klopfleisch, a Berliner, who by the early 1970s, was travelling all over Eastern Europe to watch Hertha, Bayern Munich and the West German national team. His frequent travels and personal contacts with players and trainers such as Franz Beckenbauer and Helmut Schön soon caught the attention of the Stasi. Interrogated in Hohenschönhausen prison in East Berlin and with his wife and son also subjected to a typical Stasi dirty-tricks campaign, the family ultimately left the GDR in the summer of 1989.

[99] On links between Hertha Berlin and Union Berlin fans, see René Wiese, "Wie der Fußball Löcher in die Mauer schoss – Die Ost-West Alltagskultur des Fußballs in Berlin (1961–1990)," in *Sportsstadt Berlin im Kalten Krieg. Prestigekämpfe und Systemwettstreit*, ed. Jutta Braun and Hans Joachim Teichler (Berlin: Christoph Links, 2006), 236–284; Wiese and Braun, *Doppelpässe*, 48–50, 59–60, 80–85; Dariusz Wojtaszyn, "Between East and West. Football in Divided Berlin," in *Football Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Roland Benedikter and Dariusz Wojtaszyn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 123–136.

Stasi surveillance notwithstanding, the relaxation of travel restrictions in the early 1970s enabled Hertha fans to venture more frequently into the GDR capital for Union Berlin home games, above all for the potentially explosive derby against Dynamo Berlin. Mutual forms of identity were expressed in songs and chants and the wearing of the other club's scarves and caps. In a highly provocative act, Hertha fans sold badges with the phrase "We will stick together, nothing can separate us, neither wall nor barbed wire". Another challenging political message, "Hertha und Union – eine Nation" was transmitted on head gear and cries of "Deutschland! Deutschland!" were highly disturbing reminders for the SED of a common German identity and a protest against the SED thesis of the GDR as a separate socialist nation.[100]

Cross border encounters also escalated with the GDR's East European neighbours, above all as a result of the 1972 Border of Friendship Agreement with Poland and Czechoslovakia. Whereas travel had been less restrictive to Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, especially for Western tourists, the 1972 accord led to millions of citizens of the three countries travelling as independent tourists with a police-issued personal identification card. Although non-organized travel had occurred before 1972, such as to beaches and mountains, the three governments responded to pressures for the liberalization of travel to underpin the embryonic social contract and to foster transnational friendships and regional economic cooperation. Numbers exploded with 6,774,069 East Germans visiting Poland and 5,821,507 Czechoslovakia in 1972.[101]

Camping, consumer tourism, music festivals and sports events were among the main attractions, with young people to the fore. East German sports fans took advantage of the new situation to watch West German teams in action in European competitions, often meeting up with fans from the West. The Stasi reckoned about 5,000 East German fans attended the thirteen games played by Bundesliga clubs and the West German national team in Eastern Europe between March 1979 and March 1981. Numbers ranged from the 50 at the Baník Ostrava game against Fortuna Düsseldorf to the 2,000 who watched Bayern Munich against Bohemians Prague. When Bayern met Baník Ostrava in the quarter-final of the European Cup in 1981, the 1,000 or so East Germans formed a solid bloc

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[100] Interview with Crille in Luther and Willmann, *Und niemals vergessen*, 138.

[101] Mark Keck-Szajbel, "A Cultural Shift in the 1970s: 'Texas' Jeans, Taboos and Transnational Tourism," *East European Politics and Societies, and Cultures* 29, no. 1 (2015), 2, doi: 10.1177/0888325415572257; Mark Keck-Szajbel, "The Borders of Friendship: Transnational Travel and Tourism in the East Bloc, 1972–1989" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2013), 3, 7, 13–14, 22, 28, 30, 43, 58, 62–63, 140.

of support for Bayern in one section of the ground. Many had received tickets from the Bayern manager and intermediaries.[102]

A well-coordinated venture occurred in March 1979, when several thousand East and West Berliners, half of them Union fans, travelled to watch Hertha Berlin against Dukla Prague in a UEFA semi-final cup game. A group of Hertha fans departed from Bahnhof Zoo in West Berlin, joined up with Union fans at Friedrichstrasse before continuing on to Prague where the West Berliners purchased tickets for their GDR counterparts.[103] Regular encounters across state borders and open expressions of support for a Bayern Munich or the West German national team all served as highly uncomfortable remainders for the SED of the persistence of an all-German socio-cultural community as channelled through the powerful medium of football and other sports. These primarily autonomous, transnational contacts also underline the growing permeability of Cold War borders and the pressure imposed on states to recalibrate the bureaucratic components of border regimes.

Border regimes and guards were challenged by another mass sport exodus, that of tens of thousands of East German motorcycle enthusiasts to Czechoslovakia for the annual Grand Prix event at Brno. Motor cycling was highly popular in the GDR with the annual international competition held at the famous Bergringrennen in the small town of Teterow in the Mecklenburg region the highpoint of the year's calendar. Until the SED imposed a ban on Western competitors in 1972, the event attracted riders from West Germany, Great Britain and as far away as Australia. As at the Teterow event, the appearance of 'negative-decadent' youth at Brno set in motion surveillance and disciplinary measures by the Stasi and police, triggered by an innate hostility towards non-conformist youth whether metalheads, skinheads, rock and Blues fans or simply beer drinkers who took Honecker's consumer socialism to excess. The camaraderie between East and West Germans also aroused suspicion, especially, as in 1981, when motorcycling fans from both countries shouted "Deutschland! Deutschland!" and sang the West German national anthem. Clashes between the Czechoslovak security forces and youthful fans led to a minor riot and several were handed over to the Stasi.[104]

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[102] BStU, MfS, Außenstelle Frankfurt (Oder), BdL, no. 1654, „Zusammenfassende Darstellung," East Berlin, June 1981, 15–16, 23.

[103] Interview with Franco in Luther and Willmann, *Und niemals vergessen*, 98–99.

[104] Caroline Fricke, "Getting off Track in East Germany: Adolescent Motorcycle Fans and Honecker's Consumer Socialism," in *Socialist Escapes. Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, ed. Cathleen M. Giustino, Catherine J. Plum, and Alexander Vari (New York: Berghahn, 2013), 217–218, 221–224.

Close East-West interactions could not be suppressed: in 1985, according to a Stasi informer, IM "Wagner", East Germans had enthusiastically sung the West German national anthem and supported Western riders, especially those from the FRG.[105] As late as June 1989, the Stasi elaborated plans to control East German motorcycle fans in advance of the Brno event in August. Called 'Aktion Cross', the overall planning emanated from the office of Mielke's second-in-command, Rudi Mittig, and envisaged, as in earlier years, close cooperation between the ministry's regional units and its departments for passport control, youth and sport, tourism and interrogation. The goal was to forestall personal contacts between East and West Germans and what the ministry regarded as 'undesirables' from going to Brno, that is, 'negative-decadent' and 'hostile-negative' persons. These included applicants who wished to leave the GDR. Stasi and Czechoslovak security forces were to cooperate on dealing with criminal offences committed by East Germans and informers were to be recruited to provide information from inside the various fan groups.[106] The sheer futility of such operations was soon brought into focus a few weeks later when, in August 1989, the West German embassy in Prague was occupied by East Germans intent on exiting the GDR.

Exit and Fall

Diverse cross border encounters in sport or other spheres of interest, whether in the GDR or in Eastern Europe, helped meet East Germans' wish for greater opportunities for travel as testified in Infratest polling and in letters to the authorities. The relaxation of restrictions, however, was so carefully circumscribed that it failed to dissuade East Germans from wishing to settle in the Federal Republic. From the construction of the Wall to the end of 1988, 616,000 left for the West, of whom 238,000 fled without permission, a high risk venture as border guards were under instructions to use firearms if flight could not otherwise be prevented. The signing of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975 acted as a powerful spur to apply for official permission to leave the GDR and soon promoted the emergence of a mass migration

[105] BStU, MfS, BV Suhl, BdL, no. 1545, "Plan der politisch-operativen Maßnahmen zur Sicherung der Touristen aus der DDR und zur Unterstützung des tschechoslowakischen Bruderorgans bei der Gewährleistung von Sicherheit und Ordnung anläßlich der Weltmeisterschaftsläufe für Motorräder und Seitenwagen und um den Grand Prix der CSSR in Brno/CSSR," 12 June 1989, 11, 13.

[106] Ibid., 1–14.

movement that the SED found increasingly difficult to control. In a vain attempt to defuse the situation, about 35,000 citizens were given permission to leave the GDR in 1984; a further 6,000 fled the country.[107]

Sport was deeply embedded in illegal exit.[108] An estimated 615 sports persons, the actual figure is certainly higher, including those from the Society for Sport and Technology, managed to flee the GDR between 1950 and August 1989. According to Stasi data on defection in top-level sport by athletes, trainers and medical personnel, 233 fled between 1960 and 1966, 47 between 1966 and 1978, and 24 between 1979 and 1985.[109] The Stasi and SED were most anxious to prevent defection by what were denounced as 'sports traitors' as not only did it risk the leaking of sports secrets, notably doping, but it was also highly damaging to the prestige of the GDR. Some sports scientists, such as Alois Mader and Hartmut Riedel, found employment in West German sports institutes that could draw upon their inside knowledge of doping and other sports-related programmes.[110]

Defection usually took place beyond the borders of the GDR, especially in West Germany, and was most common among field and track athletes, rowers and footballers. Among the main motives were the salary and status attached to competing in the West, dissatisfaction with social conditions in the GDR and politically determined career obstacles. Whereas the number defecting ranged between a mere three and six per annum until 1987, the numbers then rose sharply to 17 in 1988 and 19 until August 1989.[111] The most prominent figure to defect was Jürgen Sparwasser, the scorer of the GDR's winning goal against West Germany in the famous 1974 World Cup encounter. Although he managed to flee with his wife while at a seniors' football tournament in Saarbrücken, his daughter was subjected in the GDR to harassment by the Stasi.[112] Others faced similar machinations by the Stasi, with the experiences of the Dynamo Berlin

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[107] Bernd Eisenfeld, "Die Ausreisebewegung – eine Erscheinungsform widerständigen Verhaltens," in *Zwischen Selbstbehauptung und Anpassung in der DDR*, ed. Ulrike Poppe, Rainer Eckert, and Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk (Berlin: Christoph Links, 1995), 192–193, 214.

[108] Jutta Braun and René Wiese, "'Tracksuit Traitors': Eastern German Top Athletes on the Run," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 2 (2014): 1519–1534, doi: 10.1080/09523367.2014.922549.

[109] BStU, ZA, HA XX, no. 14798, "Die Hauptangriffsrichtungen gegen die Sportpolitik der DDR," 13–14.

[110] Michael Krüger, Christian Becker, and Stefan Nielsen, *German Sports, Doping, and Politics. A History of Sport Performance Enhancement* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 2015), 84–87, 120.

[111] BStU, *MfS und Leistungssport. Ein Recherchebericht*, Reihe A: Dokumente, no. 1 (Berlin: BStU, 1994), 30.

[112] Leske, *Erich Mielke*, 377–382; Jürgen Schwarz and Frank Müller, *Freigespielt. DDR-Fußballer auf der Flucht* (Dresden: Saxophon, 2015), 113–115.

footballer Lutz Eigendorf perhaps the most extreme. Some, like the Dynamo Dresden footballer Frank Lippmann and the star ski-jumper and sports medicine expert Hans-Georg Aschenbach, would find, after consulting their Stasi files, that the ministry had concocted plans to kidnap them.[113] While top-level sport may well have been underrepresented among defectors as a career in the GDR entailed intense ideological indoctrination, tight surveillance and monitoring, and status, material and other personal benefits,[114] the adverse publicity, at least for the SED, surrounding what was often spectacular escapes, fed into the pressures of mass exodus that culminated in the opening of the Berlin Wall on the evening of 9th November 1989.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the collapse of SED hegemony lay in the fundamental reappraisal of Cold War verities by the Soviet leadership under Gorbachev that precipitated bold calls for political, economic and security change throughout Eastern Europe. Despite increasingly desperate attempts by an obdurate SED leadership to distance the country from reform, the old regime was eventually overwhelmed by the attraction for many East Germans of the consumer glitz of West Germany, the frequency of personal links with West Germans, the financial and social consequences of economic depression and a loss of faith in socialism as a progressive force. Although polling data signposted these developments and the gradual erosion of support for the 'other Germany', the place of sport in the decline and fall narrative is captured more effectively from a micro-perspective. Sport's role lay primarily in its intersection with popular protests over the prioritization of top-level sport over underfunded mass forms of participation, disenchantment with the financial, moral and health costs of the top-performance sports model, and with the shift towards greater individualization in lifestyles.

The latter point was taken up in a searching appraisal of the crisis in society by Walter Friedrich, the head of the GDR's most prestigious social science institute, the Leipzig Central Institute for Youth Research.[115] He warned Egon

[113] On Lippmann, see Schwarz and Müller, *Freigespielt*, 104. On Aschenbach, see Aschenbach, *Euer Held*, 155–163, 173. Aschenbach's 90-year-old-grandmother, Lene, was put under surveillance.

[114] Hans Joachim Teichler, "Sportpolitik 1989/1990," in Teichler and Reinartz, *Das Leistungssportsystem*, 410–412.

[115] Friedrich, "Mentalitätswandel," 25–37; Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, "*Vorwärts immer, rückwärts nimmer!" Interne Dokumente zum Verfall der SED und DDR 1988/90* (Berlin: Dietz, 1994), 39, 44–46; Martin Sabrow, "Socialism as *Sinnwelt*: Communist Dictatorship and its World of Meaning in a Cultural-Historical Perspective," in *Making Sense of Dictatorship. Domination and Everyday Life*

Krenz, in 1987, that the cardinal issue – the onset of a cultural revolution among young people – was more problematic than the economic malaise. This manifested itself, according to Friedrich, in a growing self-awareness and a desire to determine their own lives free of SED and FDJ control, an individualization that was reflected in greater involvement in informal cliques, unofficial peace groups and the pursuit of leisure activities beyond the reach of officialdom. To blame the 'class enemy' for the alienation of young people was both simplistic and a barrier to reform. As discussed above, support for Friedrich's thesis is found in the exercise of agency in minor sports and football in the face of regulation and repression. The surge in private West-East sports encounters across the Berlin Wall and in Eastern Europe were other significant contributory factors in deconstructing the ideological infrastructure of state socialism and in the demolition of its concrete protective barrier. What lay ahead was unification and a radical transformation of the state socialist system, including the dismantlement of the high-performance sports Leviathan.

in East Central Europe after 1945, ed. Celia Donert, Ana Kladnik, and Martin Sabrow (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2022), 16.

2024 ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE PAG. 47–70
STUDIA TERRITORIALIA 2

THE POLITICAL ETHICS OF GERMAN SOCCER FANS

ARNE KOCH
COLBY COLLEGE

JOHN HANSON
COLBY COLLEGE

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Abstract
This article investigates the complex interplay between soccer fandom and political activism in Germany, emphasizing fan groups' emergence as significant political stakeowners. It explores the evolution of fan engagement from sports-specific to broader societal issues, illustrating how supporters articulate dissent against commercialization and advocate for ethical governance within clubs. Through representative examples of various clubs, from Stuttgart to Hamburg and from Frankfurt to Munich, this article highlights fans' responses to controversial policies like Monday fixtures, the European Super League, and human rights violations. Utilizing sociologist Tim Crabbe's analytical framework that approaches soccer culture via distinct contexts, this study critiques enduring assumptions about political homogeneity in fan behavior and examines how select groups navigate their identities as quasi-political entities. The findings suggest that German soccer fans increasingly challenge traditional notions of belonging, positioning themselves as active participants in club governance and wider societal debates. This analysis contributes to understanding the intricate relationship between soccer fandom, political activism, and club governance in Germany.

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Arne Koch is Associate Professor of German, and John Hanson is a German and Philosophy major, both at Colby College, Waterville, Maine, USA. Address any correspondence to Arne Koch, Department of German and Russian, Mayflower Hill, Waterville, ME, 04901, USA. E-mail: akoch@colby.edu.

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Introduction

Soccer stadiums have long served as political and cultural battlegrounds across Europe. Examples of these contested terrains outside Germany are many and span the political spectrum, from fans' expressions of Basque identity at Atletico Bilbao and Real Sociedad's matches during the fascist Franco regime in Spain to the promotion of Serbian nationalist ideals by Ultra groups of Red Star Belgrade in support of war criminal Slobodan Milosevic.[1] Similarly, in Germany, examples range from the Fourth Division FC Chemnitz player Daniel Frahn's association with both the ultra-right Hooligan group Kaotic Chemnitz and the disbanded NS-Boys[2] to SC Freiburg's Corillo Ultras fighting the influence of right wing political parties and propaganda.[3] Soccer terraces, as much as the pitches themselves, have therefore in varying degrees long provided political fodder. And with the increasing social mediatization of soccer,[4] the intersection of political engagement and soccer fandom has turned into a 24/7 phenomenon as thousands of fans gather in near-permanent discursive spaces.[5] Engaged in person on match days within the vernacular culture's "collective rituals and symbolic practices," supporter activities regularly bridge the temporal gaps between game days within the culture industry of (social) media coverage.[6] Supporters' collective display of backing or opposition to clubs, associations, and national

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1 Franklin Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010).

2 James Thorogood, "Daniel Frahn, Chemnitzer FC and the battle with their right-wing fans," *Deutsche Welle*, August 27, 2019, https://www.dw.com/en/daniel-frahn-chemnitzer-fc-and-the-battle-with-their-right-wing-fans/a-50179270.

3 "Kein Platz fuer [sic] AfD und rechte Hetze," *Nordtribuene.org* (blog), January 20, 2024, https://nordtribuene.org/albums/sc-freiburg-hoffenheim-32-18-spieltag-1-bundesliga/.

4 The term mediatization here loosely draws on Stig Hjavard, "The Mediatization of Society," *Nordicom Review* 29, no. 2 (2017): 102–131, doi: 10.1515/nor-2017-0181.

5 The politicization of German soccer fans is neither sudden nor recent. With the rise of ultras in German stadiums in the 1990s, one could trace the rise of their politicization alongside the "gentrification" of the game back to that decade, as suggested by Gerd Dembowski, "Rassismus: Brennglas Fußball," in *Deutsche Zustände*, Folge 5, ed. Wilhelm Heitmeyer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 217–225. See also Rebeccah Dawson et al., eds., *Football Nation: The Playing Fields of German Culture, History, and Society* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022).

6 Tim Crabbe, "From the Terraces to the Boardrooms," *International Review of Modern Sociology* 32, no. 2 (2006), 241–256, here 253.

politics once may have been limited mostly to stadium or fan group gatherings. Now, they continue in social media environments asynchronously, around the clock, and, ostensibly, even more anonymously than in stadium crowds. With the accelerated blending of sports and politics, both are consumed and generated on the same social media platforms, and algorithmically merged. An intensification of the politicization of soccer therefore appears inevitable, resulting also in a back-and-forth between fans and politicians. And the possibilities of continual engagement for fan group participants with their peers thus only adds to the stabilization and challenges of their identity profiles – creating, as Mark Doidge has suggested, "a space of continuous performance."[7] With a focus on German soccer fan groups and clubs, select studies have consequently honed in on these junctures of group identities and fans' political engagement, whether with a focus on Dynamo Dresden's self-declared apolitical but in reality right-leaning Ultras,[8] or in analyses of FC St. Pauli's leftist and non-conformist banner waving.[9] While studies of representative clubs underscore above all a perceived polarization of Ultras versus Hooligans, or Antifa versus HooNaRa (HooligansNazisRacists), the sophistication of how fan groups as stakeholders participate in political debates beyond established tribal lines is this article's primary concern. Although scholars in sports management, social psychology, and public policy have broadly identified sports fans as an under-investigated ethical community, consideration of German soccer fans as "stakeowners" (i.e. stakeholders with rights *and* responsibilities) has been largely missing.[10] This article compares select examples as representative of how German soccer fans express

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[7] Mark Doidge, Radoslaw Kossakowski, and Svenja Mintert, *Ultras: The Passion and Performance of Contemporary Football Fandom* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 96.

[8] Daniel Ziesche, "'The East' strikes back. Ultras Dynamo, Hyper-Stylization, and Regimes of Truth," *Sport in Society* 21, no. 6 (2018): 883–890, doi: 10.1080/17430437.2017.1300389.

[9] Petra Daniel and Christos Kassimeris, "The Politics and Culture of FC St. Pauli: from leftism, through anti-establishment, to commercialization," *Soccer & Society* 14, no. 2 (2013), 167–182, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2013.776466. See also Mick Totten, "Football and Community Empowerment," *Soccer & Society* 17, no. 5 (2016): 703–720, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2015.1100436.

[10] Bram Constandt, Milena M. Parent, and Annick Willem, "Does It Really Matter? A Study on Soccer Fans' Perceptions of Ethical Leadership and Their Role as 'Stakeowners,'" *Sport Management Review* 23, no. 3 (2019): 374–386, doi: 10.1016/j.smr.2019.04.003. The idea of "moral ownership," as introduced in David and Peter Kennedy's case study of Everton FC supporters, is a related concept, although in their discussion it is utilized almost exclusively in terms of economic considerations (moral economy; political economy; economic ownership). See David Kennedy and Peter Kennedy, "Towards a Marxist Political Economy of Football Supporters," *Capital and Class* 34, no. 2 (2010): 181–198, doi: 10.1177/0309816810365520. See also Daniel Fitzpatrick, "The Moral Economy of the English Football Crowd: The European Super League and the Contingency of Football Fan Activism," *Capital and Class,* February 15, 2024, doi: 10.1177/03098168241232375.

a sense of activism and ownership that highlights their political dissent and how ethical considerations frequently determine their actions. Understood to reflect the active role of soccer fans in influencing club management's decisions, ultras as stake*owners* or prosumers generate the cultural and emotional content that fuels clubs' images and, with it, the perceived charge for fans to partake in or actively shape stadium politics and beyond.

In order to explore the scope, motivation, and impact of supporter engagement, this article concentrates on three sporting contexts or arenas in which fan activism plays out. By analyzing discourses from the vernacular (club, fan groups, game day performance of supporters), culture industrial (social/media and sponsorship), and institutional (club management and boardroom) arenas of German soccer – an analytical framework proposed by sociologist Tim Crabbe[11] – this article posits two main questions: Can assumptions about political homogeneity in fan behavior be upheld given the diversity of German soccer ultras?[12] And is the assertion correct that it is *fans'* behavior that "creates conflicts with other stakeholders and affects club policy"?[13] Given the different possibilities of political engagement, this topic is too far-ranging to be exhaustively covered in a short study. However, consideration of how fan groups conceive of their communities as quasi-political bodies and what issues matter to them can help explain both their concern with organizational constructs and norms as well as those concerns' extension to fans' sense of self as actors in discursive spaces. This article therefore concentrates on representative episodes that show how fans influence their clubs and associations to re-examine policies as part of their corporate ethics strategy.[14]

Our analysis of fans' political engagement thereby highlights how German fandom has evolved to serve as a principal site for contesting notions of contemporary identity, beyond what has been more narrowly associated with ideas

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[11] Crabbe, "From the Terraces," 252.

[12] Udo Merkel, "Football Fans and Clubs in Germany: Conflicts, Crises and Compromises," *Soccer & Society* 13, no. 3 (2012): 359–376, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2012.655505.

[13] Phillipp Winskowski, "Managing for Stakeholders in Football: Conflicts Arising from the Goals and Behaviour of Active Fans," *Soccer & Society* 23, no. 8 (2022): 1143–1159, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2022.2042267.

[14] We use the looser concept of corporate ethical strategy here instead of a more codified notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) to emphasize how the motivation of fans often deviates from their club's corporate structures and thereby claims ethical resistance against it. For additional information about CSR in German soccer, see Johannes Jäger and Matthias Fifka, "A Comparative Study of Corporate Social Responsibility in English and German Professional Football," *Soccer & Society* 21, no. 7 (2020): 802–820, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2020.1749052.

of national belonging.[15] Instead, supporters' attachment to specific localities in German soccer is tied to displays of local or regional expressions of self.[16] While supporters' engagement may thus first materialize and be motivated locally or regionally, its impact reaches beyond what Mike Cronin calls the "sacred spaces" of the stadium.[17] It is through a local and regional sense of belonging that supporters' stances of resistance develop against what is seen as the encroachment of principles associated with modern soccer. The reach, for example, of subcultural movements like Against Modern Football (AMF) – beyond regional resistance toward becoming a transnational movement – illustrates how supporters' engagement locally/regionally both inside and outside the stadium has representative significance beyond limited localities.[18] Therefore, this article focuses on regionally-specific examples of supporter engagement in different sporting contexts, with the understanding that these are broadly representative for German soccer.[19] By looking at examples of how fans of different clubs from different regions have become focal points in political and media debates, this article thereby considers ostensible forms of exclusive sports activism (club and association policies) and its proximity to – and even transformation into – more general forms of societal and political engagement (e.g. immigration policies, political extremism, and corporate influence).[20] We include illustrations from Stuttgart

[15] For more on the ideas of national belonging in German soccer, see, among others, Matthias Kaelberer, "From Bern to Rio: Soccer and National Identity Discourses in Germany," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 30 (2017): 275–294, doi: 10.1007/s10767-016-9234-6, and Udo Merkel, "German Football Culture in the New Millennium: Ethnic Diversity, Flair and Youth on and off the Pitch," *Soccer & Society* 15, no. 2 (2013): 241–255, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2013.849189.

[16] Local pride and regional belonging are illustrations of topophilia which are prevalent among ultras and supporters of movements such as Against Modern Football. This intersection of topos and subcultural manifestations is prevalent in soccer as arenas and spaces associated with local clubs are frequently saturated with traditional meanings. See Alan Tomlinson, *A Dictionary of Sports Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[17] Mike Cronin, "Enshrined in Blood. The Naming of Gaelic Athletic Association Grounds and Clubs," *The Sports Historian* 18, no. 1 (1998): 90–104, doi: 10.1080/17460269809444771.

[18] For more on AMF and how it can be transnational at once without "any clear leadership" and against homogenizing principles, see Mark Doidge et al, "The Impact of International Football Events on Local, National and Transnational Fan Cultures: A Critical Overview," *Soccer & Society* 20, no. 5 (2019): 711–720, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2019.1616264.

[19] Large portions of supporters see themselves as "tradition keepers" as shown in the discussion about the symbolism of soccer clubs within constructions of regional identities by Adriano Gómez-Bantel, "Football Clubs as Symbols of Regional Identities," *Soccer & Society* 17, no. 5 (2015): 692–702, here 692, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2015.1100430.

[20] Sport activism here is used as a form of engagement or advocacy, as Mick Totten shows, "for social or political change in sport, or through sport; for social or political change elsewhere." See Mick Totten, "Sport Activism and Political Praxis within the FC Sankt Pauli Fan Subculture," *Soccer & Society* 16, no. 4 (2014): 453–468, here 455, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2014.882828. Nino Numer-

and Hamburg (in the context of disputed player identities), Leipzig (and the intertwining of AMF with party political intrusion), Frankfurt (and the debate about exclusion of club members associated with a right-wing political party), as well as Munich (and the member-driven initiative to force Bayern Munich to sever ties with sponsor Qatar Airways).[21] Notwithstanding the fact that the classical idea of fans' membership in an imagined community still matters, Nathan Kalman-Lamb's suggestion that "[t]eam sport supplants ... the nation as a form of identification in the context of ever-advancing capitalist societies" is central to this article and reinforces the need to focus on local/regional examples as representative.[22] At the same time, such a notion is conceptually important beyond the fan perspective. It clarifies not only the intersection of fans' identities with their role as stakeowners and how that intersection informs their political ethics, but also why it is equally important to consider clubs' responses to and treatment of their fans as part of a broader discourse.

Sports Activism In-Between Stadium and Societal Concerns

It is important to acknowledge upfront that the idea of soccer fans' political engagement does not immediately have to appear as an outright single-mindedness on broad societal concerns. Instead, it can remain ostensibly more centered on matters specific to the world of German soccer. All the while, even such sports activism rarely operates in a vacuum and speaks in the end to an often-larger matter. Three examples illustrate the sports-specific-turned-societally-important ways in which German fans have engaged first within the vernacular culture of the stadiums before taking their actions and protests to social media and the culture industry. In the case of professional German soccer, one might immediately think of fans' steady and repeated articulation of

ato differentiates between forms of soccer activism "in" (to address soccer issues) and "through" (to address non-soccer issues) before resolving this tension as "more or less connected" via the notion of a "football fan activism complex." See Dino Numerato, *Football Fans, Activism and Social Change* (London; Routledge, 2018), 9. Because these two directions are rarely neatly separated from one another, our article avoids this wording to preclude perceptions a binarity.

[21] Because of the heterogeneity of supporters and their specific political interests, other relevant topics could have been addressed but were omitted due to the limited scope of our analysis: LGBTQ+ (Bayer Leverkusen and Werder Bremen), gender equality (St. Pauli and Dynamo Dresden), reactions to the wars in Ukraine and Israel/Gaza (FSV Mainz, Hamburg SV, and others), or, most recently, the DFL-investor protests nationwide.

[22] Nathan Kalman-Lamb, "Imagined Communities of Fandom: Sport, Spectatorship, Meaning and Alienation in Late Capitalism," *Sport in Society* 24, no. 6 (2020): 922–936, here 929, doi: 10.1080/17430437.2020.1720656.

resistance to the scheduling of *Montagsspiele* (fixtures on Monday evenings) away from traditional weekend slots.[23] Before the 2017/18 season, games traditionally took place on Saturday afternoons, with a few matches on Fridays and Sundays as gameday book ends, in order to accommodate Champions League participants. With financial motivation leading Bundesliga clubs and the DFL (German Football League) to agree initially on five Monday fixtures per season,[24] the ensuing four-year battle between fans and the DFB (German Football Association) is well documented. And the fight epitomizes how fans in the stadiums performed on a large scale while organizing in locally-specific ways.[25] From colorful banners at most games – both in terms of design and choice language – fans, beginning with the first *Montagsspiel* between Eintracht Frankfurt and RB Leipzig in February 2018, made it known that they objected to the new schedule. Fan protests targeted the game's commercialization and what they saw as attacks on traditional fan cultures. How could fans possibly journey several hundred miles across Germany at the end of a workday to support their teams? The prioritization of TV schedules for prime-time considerations over spectator experiences was visibly at the center of the conflict. Elaborate choreos, banners, chants, toilet paper rolls thrown onto pitches, and even periods of silent fan sections and game boycotts were ever-changing forms of never-ceasing fan protests. "No to Monday games" – this slogan quickly took over German stadiums, as social media and fan publications just as swiftly attacked both the DFB and select club leaders for supporting the new game schedule. Just a little over a season in, then, the end of *Montagsspiele*, scheduled for 2022, was celebrated in November 2018 by fan organizations and Germany's leading soccer publication *kicker* alike as a distinct fan victory. Helen Breit, member of

[23] Resistance against *Montagsspiele* were not just a phenomenon of the 2010s as game day scheduling in the 2. Bundesliga was already targeted by fan protests in the 1990s, which were acknowledged as reasons that these were ultimately cancelled. See, for example, Florian Nussdorfer, "Der Montag hat keinen Platz mehr," *11Freunde*, February 17, 2022, https://11freunde.de/artikel/der-montag-hat-keinen-platz-mehr/5386375. At the moment, there are also first waves of protest at games of the German Frauen-Bundesliga against *Montagsspiele* that were first introduced a year ago. See "Türchen 4: Die Nutrias und Proteste gegen Montagsspiele," *bolztribuene* (blog), December 4, 2024, https://bolztribuene.de/2024/12/04/adventskalender-4-protest-montagsspiele/. All translations are our own.

[24] "Eintracht-Präsident Fischer will Montagspiele abschaffen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 7, 2018, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/sport/fussball/bundesliga/eintracht-frankfurt-praesident-fischer-gegen-montagspiele-15481666.html.

[25] Matt Ford, "Bundesliga Monday games to be discontinued as fan protests persist," *Deutsche Welle*, November 21, 2018, https://www.dw.com/en/bundesliga-monday-games-to-be-discontinued-as-fan-protests-persist/a-46390559.

the fan organization *Unsere Kurve* [Our Curve], noted precisely this sentiment in an interview with the Sport-Informations-Dienst: "That the protests led to the discontinuation of the Monday games is a big success of the fan scene."[26] Success was not only seen in the concrete outcome of ending the unwanted scheduling of games. It was, perhaps even more importantly, seen widely by fan organizations and individual protesters alike as a key success, in and of itself, that fans had organized in protest in the first place.

Swift organizational responses emerge in this way as a defining characteristic for fan groups when they identify new targets for activism. Amid discussions about reforms of the UEFA Champions League format and the concurrent, but so far failed, formation of a European Super League (ESL), BVB Dortmund Ultras *The Unity*, for example, immediately voiced their opposition with banners outside their club's training grounds ("Clear words instead of empty lines: ESL – Refusal now and forever").[27] Envisioned to comprise only the most successful teams from Europe's top leagues, the ESL was quickly seen by more than just fans as a threat to existing formats of European club competition, which are widely regarded as part of a soccer tradition. Experts and fans alike feared that the ESL would create a closed system, exclusively favoring elite clubs and eliminating opportunities for smaller teams to advance. Thus, even Dortmund's nemeses, Bayern Munich's ultras, shared similar disapproval both in and around their stadium ("Whether Super League or CL reforms: football for fans, not millionaires").[28] *Red Fanatic München* immediately took their protest online when they issued a statement on behalf of the ultra section *Südkurve* asking the club to reject all plans for a Super League and instead to focus on soccer as "bodenständig und demütig" (rooted and humble).[29] Understood as a rejection by what can only be seen as a traditionalist self-understanding of fans and as an embrace of

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[26] "Neuer Spielplan auch dank der Proteste. Heute steigt das letzte Montagsspiel – 'Großer Erfolg für die Fanszenen,'" *Kicker,* April 12, 2021, https://www.kicker.de/heute-steigt-das-letzte-montagsspiel-grosser-erfolg-fuer-die-fanszenen-801856/artikel.

[27] "Super League: Bayern sagen 'Nein' – BVB-Ultras positionieren sich klar," *Ruhr Nachrichten*, April 20, 2021, https://www.ruhrnachrichten.de/bvb/super-league-bayern-sagen-nein-bvb-ultras-positionieren-sich-klar-w1625588-2000221007.

[28] Matt Ford (@matt_4d), "Bayern Munich supporters on the weekend their club won a 31st German championship," X, May 9, 2021, 10:05 a.m., https://x.com/matt_4d/status/1391303292412645379.

[29] "Nein zur Super League, Nein zur beschlossenen Reform – Bayernfans gegen den Ausverkauf des Fußballs," *Red Fanatic München* (blog), April 20, 2021, https://redfanatic-muenchen.com/cms/nein-zur-super-league-nein-zur-beschlossenen-reform-bayernfans-gegen-den-ausverkauf-des-fussballs/.

thriving fan cultures in Germany,[30] game day protests against *Montagsspiele* and Champions League reforms thereby appear as much as performances of what soccer fans regard as exemplary as they do concrete articulations of objections against corporate and external influences.[31]

With their outright purpose of curbing the influence of single or external club investors, ongoing debates about the DFL's 50+1 rule directly tie into this tension between fans and corporate interest. This membership governance rule essentially stipulates that clubs qua their fans/members maintain a majority of the voting rights in perpetuity, and consequently, "clubs will not be allowed to play in the Bundesliga [and Bundesliga 2] if commercial investors have more than a 49 percent stake."[32] However, the rule underscores at once the proximity of fans' self-understanding as constituents, that is, as voting members, and the broader implications of what may, on the surface, appear as soccer-specific concerns only. Clubs exempt from the 50+1 rule, such as the Volkswagen-financed VfL Wolfsburg and Bayer industries-backed Leverkusen, have quasi-organically evolved since their founding from *Werksmannschaften* (factory or company teams) into widely accepted organizations with supporter clubs across the country and abroad.[33] Their recognition – since their inception predates the founding of the Bundesliga in 1963 – still stands in contrast to so-called *Retorten-Fußballvereine*. This epithet, best translated "test-tube soccer clubs," targets billionaire-owned TSG Hoffenheim[34] and, more notably, the universal-

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[30] Siemen Schmidt and Jorg Koenigstorfer, "Fan Centricity of German Soccer Teams: Exploring the Construct and Its Consequences," *Soccer & Society* 23, no. 1 (2012): 89–103, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2021.1915780.

[31] For more on the tension between domestic and international soccer developments and competitions, see John Williams, "Rethinking Sports Fandom: The Case of European Soccer," *Leisure Studies* 26, no. 2 (2007): 127–146, doi: 10.1080/02614360500503414.

[32] "German soccer rules: 50+1 explained," *Bundesliga.com,* May 22, 2022, https://www.bundesliga.com/en/news/Bundesliga/german-soccer-rules-50-1-fifty-plus-one-explained-466583.jsp. See also "Satzung des Ligaverbands," *DFB,* May 22, 2022, 8, http://www.dfb.de/fileadmin/_dfbdam/14_Satzung_Liga_DFL.pdf; and Sebastian Björn Bauers et al., "Club Members in German Professional Football and Their Attitude towards the '50+1 Rule' – A Stakeholder-Oriented Analysis," *Soccer & Society* 21, no. 3 (2019): 274–288, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2019.1597717.

[33] Bayer 04 Leverkusen lists a fan club each in Luxemburg and in Russia among its own. See "Die Bayer 04-Fanclubs – Leidenschaft von Monheim bis Moskau," *Bayer 04 Leverkusen Homepage,* May 23, 2022, https://www.bayer04.de/de-de/news/fans/die-bayer-04-fanclubs-leidenschaft-von-monheim-bis-moskau?vid=20181128_Fanclub_1976-2.

[34] Dietmar Hopp, founder of German software giant SAP, held 96% of the membership vote between 2015 and 2023, when, with approval from Hoffenheim's club membership, he returned the majority of his voting shares. See "Mitglieder stimmen Antrag auf Rückgabe der Stimmrechtsmehrheit zu," *TSG Hoffenheim Homepage*, June 12, 2023, https://www.tsg-hoffenheim.de/aktuelles/news/2023/06/mitglieder-stimmen-dem-antrag-auf-rueckgabe-der-stimmrechtsmehrheit-zu.

ly-abhorred Red Bull corporation-financed RB Leipzig, which was created only in 2009 after purchasing the playing rights of Oberliga side (fifth-division) SSV Markranstädt. While it is often the idea of financial fair play (or lack thereof) that motivates soccer fans and journalists alike to voice disapproval of projects like Leipzig inside and outside stadiums, AMF arguments ("10 years RBL = 10 years too many! Piss off!") and governance objections (lack of "member determination, the 50+1 rule, [...] fundamental values of a soccer club")[35] almost always appear simultaneously. It is important to note that critical examinations of these traditionalist arguments as exemplars of antisemitic resentment communication – a term coined by Julijana Ranc[36] – do highlight how problematic the criticism of German fans against Leipzig can appear. Just as this argument, however, is based on examining discourse and representation *without* motives, intention, or victims' perception,[37] one can approach the discourse around traditionalist arguments and stakeowner expressions without projecting latent or unstated motives onto it.

Remarkably, the rhetoric used by Leipzig in defense of its success has failed to negate criticism leveled against the organization, even as it attempts to draw on traditional soccer markers of belonging and even regional identity. In a Twitter exchange (now X), for example, with Michael Kretschmer, Prime Minister of Saxony, following Leipzig's 2022 win of the DFB-Pokal (German Cup), the club appeared to appropriate traditionalist domains of regional belonging and selflessness by embracing its supporters and community by claiming the cup win "für uns alle: Diesen Club, unsere schöne Stadt Leipzig und ganz Sachsen!" (for all of us: this club, our beautiful city of Leipzig and all of Saxony!).[38] Leipzig's choice to respond to critics on social media exposes a keen awareness that what the club misses, and which other traditional clubs, members, and fans instead have long possessed may still be the prerequisite for its own (hoped for and) eventual acceptance in the world of German soccer: the claim to build on or

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[35] Anton Zirk, "RB Leipzig erwartet in Mönchengladbach 19-minütiges Pfeifkonzert," *Sportbuzzer.de,* August 29, 2018, https://www.sportbuzzer.de/artikel/rb-leipzig-erwartet-in-monchengladbach-19-minutiges-pfeifkonzert/.

[36] Julijana Ranc, *"Eventuell nichtgewollter Antisemitismus." Zur Kommunikation antijüdischer Ressentiments unter deutschen Durchschnittsbürgern* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2016).

[37] See Pavel Brunssen, "Antisemitic Metaphors in German Football Fan Culture Directed at RB Leipzig," in *Football Nation: The Playing Fields of German Culture, History, and Society*, ed. Rebeccah Dawson et al. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022), 218–239, here 220.

[38] RB Leipzig (@RBLeipzig), "Danke! Dieser Pokal ist für uns alle: Diesen Club, unsere schöne Stadt Leipzig und ganz Sachsen!," X, May 22, 2022, 0:04 a.m., https://x.com/RBLeipzig/status/1528134689768316928.

have a tradition, to have regional roots rather than being a club designed for marketing only.[39] That the Tweet was tellingly generated and promoted through the marketing channels of an Austrian-owned company, rather than the club's still limited fanbase or perhaps its mere 21 regular voting members, underscores this point.[40]

Leipzig struggles, at opportune moments, to create widely acceptable imagery that speaks to these evidently necessary traditions. Within the context of the already-mentioned first German Cup victory, for example, the social media department of RB Leipzig used the iconic and hallowed trophy for what can only be described as blatant product placement. Instead of a celebration of the traditional chalice, from which players enjoy a sip or two of a celebratory beer, the Leipzig PR department decided to share on Twitter an action shot of their midfielder, Kevin Kampl, as he poured a "Celebration Can" of Red Bull into the trophy for its official inauguration ("offiziell eingeweiht").[41] A moment that could have fashioned an indelible image of a Leipzig player as *one of us*, connecting the team with celebrating soccer fans beyond the RB Leipzig fan base, instead further intensified already negative reactions toward the club. This post contrasts sharply with how fans of Leipzig's final opponent, SC Freiburg, had chosen to celebrate their earlier semifinal win over Hamburg SV: an image on social media of one of their players leaving Volkspark stadium with a case of beer. That Leipzig's failed product placement was anything but accidental was quickly and candidly acknowledged by online media close to the club.[42] To add insult to the injury of non-Leipzig fans, instead of providing a narrative with simple material evidence that Leipzig had now become a part of German soccer history, the club in its place shared again on Twitter a close-up of the club's name engraved on the trophy underneath iconic predecessors like Borussia Mönchengladbach and Kickers Offenbach, however with added braggadocious commentary: "gewöhnt

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[39] For conflicts between parts of the RB Leipzig fan base and club management, see Pavel Brunssen, *Antisemitismus in Fußball-Fankulturen* (Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2021).

[40] Ullrich Kroemer, "Zwei Neue im Verein: RB Leipzig hat jetzt 21 Mitglieder," *RBlive,* March 31, 2021, https://rblive.de/news/zwei-neue-im-verein-rb-leipzig-hat-jetzt-21-mitglieder-3297788. RB Leipzig membership is costly, and new members gain membership only if accepted by club leadership, which is made up almost entirely of Austrian employees of the Red Bull GmbH.

[41] RB Leipzig (@RBLeipzig), "Damit ist der Pokal offiziell eingeweiht. Natürlich nur mit dem guten Tropfen: Der RB Leipzig Celebration Can," X, May 22, 2022, 12:21 p.m., https://x.com/RBLeipzig/status/1528320030278033409.

[42] "Kampl und Olmo provozieren mit Dose. RB Leipzig kann mit Hatern gut leben," *RBlive*, May 23, 2022, https://rblive.de/news/kevin-kampl-red-bull-dfb-pokal-provokation-etwas-hate-kommt-rb-leipzig-gelegen-3382493.

euch dran" (get used to it).[43] It is an intriguing example of the fine line between expressing confidence – not at all unusual in social media self-representation in the world of sports – and intentional provocation; the clash of word (i.e., accept the new) and image (Leipzig embedded in the tradition of German soccer) encapsulates the broad tension between the club and soccer fans.

Following this type of provocation, unsurprisingly, there were no congratulatory messages for Leipzig's Cup victory from other teams, but instead statements of support for their opponent. Third-division VfL Osnabrück's unusual step to issue a public statement by President Holger Elixmann and Managing Director Michael Welling received special media attention, as it not only backed SC Freiburg, which had defeated Osnabrück in an earlier round but, more importantly, also outlined how fans' emphasis on traditions are explicitly tied to a desire for clubs to maintain an appropriate corporate ethics strategy:

> Different from other clubs, the promotion of togetherness and of the sport are not the focus [of RB Leipzig], the public good were not a founding idea and the values of the game did not inspire its development – instead the promotion of the brand "Red Bull" and the value of the brand "Red Bull." Soccer were instrument and means, instead of external investors as a means for developing the soccer club.[44]

Fans' activism is understood to focus on maintaining the traditional principles of German soccer, and here it is clearly tied to broader interests. "Togetherness," "the public good," and, broadly speaking, "values" are seen as motivation for club management to affirm these qualities directly against the corporate influence on soccer, as embodied by RB Leipzig. Osnabrück's management, in step with its fanbase, is moved by more than just being "tradition keepers,"[45] as supporters serve as more than just carriers of group identity: they are carriers of a desire for ethical articulation per their claim (and acceptance here by club leadership) of being *stakeowners*.

Reaffirming the intersection of sports and politics, especially in social media, the buzz created by Osnabrück's public statement gains further significance in light of the simultaneous celebration of Leipzig's win by politicians. Thrusting RB Leipzig squarely into the context of a loaded pan-German ideology, the then

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[43] RB Leipzig (@RBLeipzig), "Auf ewig ein Teil dieser großartigen Pokal-Historie. Gewöhnt euch dran," X, May 22, 2022, 7:30 a.m., https://twitter.com/RBLeipzig/status/1528246779346444288.

[44] Michael Welling and Holger Elixmann, "Warum der VfL Osnabrück dem SC Freiburg die Daumen drückt," *VfL Osnabrück*, May 20, 2022, https://www.vfl.de/offener-brief-pokalfinale/.

[45] Gómez-Bantel, "Football Clubs," 692.

co-chairperson and federal spokesperson of the AfD [Alternative for Germany], Tino Chrupalla, politicized the club's win with an emphasis on "Saxon stalwartness and Austrian entrepreneurial spirit' as a win over political 'correctness.'"[46] With one simple tweet, Chrupalla thus cast aside the issue of financial fair play, apparently reserved for the sphere of soccer, and attempted to turn the event instead into a broader, nationally relevant political topic; it was generally considered a failed attempt, however, as the rather underwhelming attention to his tweet – with fewer than 450 retweeted and quoted tweets between May 21 and July 15, 2022 – statistically underscores. Soccer fans mostly did not engage Chrupalla. Their reticence repeats and reinforces the increasing resistance to these types of national tropes in favor of the articulation and contestation of notions of belonging on a more local or regional level.[47]

Club-Families, Political Freedom, and Corporate Image Control

Among fans and their clubs, notions of belonging are often most publicly articulated in the context of player identities. This phenomenon extends soccer contexts into the broader social and political sphere and thereby breaches presumed gaps between the two. Support for players, regardless of their background, admittedly often differs between fan groups, depending greatly on a player's success, reputation, and even their general appeal, etc. The examples of forwards Silas Wamangituka from VfB Stuttgart and Bakery Jatta from the Hamburger SV, however, bring into focus the role occupied by fan groups to curate and reimagine a sense of community among supporters and their club. Most clubs certainly cannot be characterized as progressive and inclusive communities like St. Pauli, where supporters' progressive attitudes toward LGBTQ+ issues, fascism, refugees – and more – are not only accepted but promoted by club management, making the club "the symbolic champion of social inclusion in a sport that often divides and excludes as much as it unites."[48] At the Hamburg-based club, a progressive sense of community is deliberately promoted at

[46] Tino Chrupalla (@Tino_Chrupalla), "Ich gratuliere RB Leipzig zum verdienten Sieg im #DFBPokalfinale!" X, May 21, 2022, 11:23 p.m., https://twitter.com/Tino_Chrupalla/status/1528124354403389441.

[47] Kalman-Lamb, "Imagined Communities of Fandom," 929.

[48] David Kennedy and Peter Kennedy, "Introduction: Reflections on the Context of 'Left Wing' Fan Cultures," *Soccer & Society* 14, no. 2 (2013): 117–131, here 124, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2013.776463. Some examples of fan activism, including feminism, LGBTQ+ rights (Bayer Leverkusen and Werder Bremen), gender equality (St. Pauli and Dynamo Dresden), reactions to the wars in Ukraine and Israel/Gaza (FVS Mainz, Hamburg SV, and others), memory culture, the DFL-in-

all fronts, from publications and game day music to charity events and merchandise.[49] For other clubs, however, it is often more difficult to determine whether fans' behavior is driven by self-serving interest to ensure the club's well-being (that is, by avoiding scandal, the shaming from other fan groups, and, of course, assuring competitive success) or whether there could be communal or ethical considerations driving their actions.

The discussions about Jatta and Wamangituka's identities are exemplary in this context, albeit slightly different. Jatta, a Gambian refugee, had been on the receiving end of a two-year-long media campaign by Germany's largest tabloid, *Bild*, which eventually turned into a legal battle against him, claiming that he had entered Germany with a false identity to gain refugee status.[50] In the case of Congolese Wamangituka, his agent falsified the player's documents and pressured him to accept this illegal move before ultimately coming clean together with his club.[51] Unsurprisingly, both incidents were litigated at once inside and outside the stadium. Quickly, both clubs and fan groups expressed their support for the players as one of *them*. It thereby underscored the centrality of fan groups in creating community, both real and imagined. Both players were predictably supported on game days as supporter clubs displayed banners and created new chants (vernacular). And when the groups went on social media to express further solidarity (culture industrial), they held up both players as one of theirs who had found a new "Heimat" (home) in theirs ("Silas Katompa Mvumpa or Wamangituka... I don't care what he is called [sic] he is one of us!"; "You are one of us Baka – and it will be like that forever!").[52] At the same time, club statements reproduced this communal idea as they reiterated throughout the protracted ordeals that Jatta and Wamangituka were part of a club-"Familie."[53] Intriguingly,

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vestor protests nationwide, etc., show similar discussions about ethical behavior and supporter demands for their clubs but are beyond the scope of this article.

49 Totten, "Sport Activism."

50 Enrico Michelini and Klaus Seiberth, "(Anti-)Hero, Refugee, Soccer Player: The Case of Bakery Jatta. A Discourse Analysis of German Newspapers," *Soccer & Society* 24, no. 5 (2022): 622–635, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2022.2080668.

51 Christof Kneer, "Abstiegskampf in der Bundesliga: Er ist dann mal wieder weg," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, February 22, 2022, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/fussball-vfb-stuttgart-silas-katompa-mvumpa-1.5534579.

52 Luca (@forzastuttgart), "Silas Katompa Mvumpa oder Wamangituka... Mir egal wie er heißt er ist einer von uns!" X, June 8, 2021, 10:00 a.m., https://x.com/forzastuttgart/status/1402173693833498624?s=20&t=3UJdc0kTuk3dnP1q-BDooQ; HSV Supporters Club (@hsv_sc), "Solidarität mit unserem Spieler und Mitmenschen Bakery #Jatta," x, December 6, 2021, 3:09 p.m., https://x.com/hsv_sc/status/1467858618733285383.

53 VfB Stuttgart, "Silas erklärt seine Identität," *VfB Stuttgart Homepage*, June 8, 2021, https://www.vfb.de/de/vfb/aktuell/neues/profis/2021/silas-wamangituka-stellungnahme.

Stuttgart's sustained expression of solidarity and inclusion designed for its German fan base was notably left out of the English-facing version on its website. The club's evident awareness of how its media presence matters and directly speaks to its fans suggests two interrelated ideas. It speaks to the domestic fan base's (i.e. fans as prosumers) influence on the official communication of their club, and, at the same time, to a perhaps more commercial motivation of the club to leave out something political from their communication to non-German speaking fans in international markets.

Culture industry and vernacular culture – two of the discursive contexts highlighted by Crabbe – came together instantly, as regional media aligned with the fans' position and backed both players. Descriptions of Jatta and Wamangituka as their native sons ("Jatta? Daffeh? Hamburg lad") created an unambiguous contrast to the national media blitz by *Bild* and its sports outlet *Sport Bild*.[54] The tone of most fans, clubs, and the media was one of welcome and, notably, featured expressions of local and regional inclusion and belonging. Predictably, however, detractors during and after the conclusion of both incidents turned the failed legal persecution away from regional into nationalist narratives, not unlike we already saw for AfD spokesperson Chrupalla. Online hecklers not only continued to doubt the veracity of both players' statements and identities but attempted to portray these individual high-profile cases as representative and universally applicable to refugees and foreigners in Germany, many of who would, therefore, have to be equally illegal.[55] Again, lest we forget, it had been concluded by German authorities and courts that neither Jatta nor Wamangituka had been at fault. So, the creation of false narratives by politicians and media outlets went against reality and intentionally fanned the flames of divisiveness according to ethnic and national markers of difference. Yet this reality, locally anchored and articulated in Stuttgart and Hamburg, was defended by fans and clubs, reinforcing a unified ethical stance and resistance to populist agendas.

Populist, nationalist insertions like these into the world of German soccer by individuals and political parties are, of course, far from isolated and have correspondingly motivated other distinct reactions beyond supporters for domestic club sides. One such practice stands out for its constancy: the AfD's practice of

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[54] Simon Braasch, Robin Meyer, and Mike Schlink, "Jatta? Daffeh? Hamburger Jung," *Hamburger Morgenpost*, July 3, 2020.

[55] Numerous replies to VfB Stuttgart's Tweet regarding Wamangituka's statement included assertions of other supposed instances of false identities in Germany. VfB Stuttgart (@VfB), "Silas klärt seine Identität. Zur Meldung," X, June 8, 2021, 9:46 a.m., https://x.com/VfB/status/1402170032516440066.

calling for the removal of players like Mesut Özil, Ilkay Gündoğan, and Antonio Rüdiger from the national team for controversies either manufactured or heightened by the party's own outrage.[56] It is a practice one may well describe as cancel culture, despite the AfD's paranoid rejection of this very practice, which reinforces the proximity of political and social issues inside and outside Germany's soccer stadiums. Ironically, calls in different clubs and at different divisional levels – from fan organizations to club leadership – to consider the exclusion of AfD members from membership or at least game day bans boomeranged the narrative from the party's attack on players to attacks on the party itself.

How soccer's political payback revealed locally-specific characteristics, even as it shared an ethical resistance to right-wing ideology in boardrooms and terraces, can further be traced through three other examples. First, anti-establishment St Pauli has displayed a long-standing willingness and even inclination to back its supporters and affiliate the club with anti-right wing slogans like FCK NZS.[57] Similarly, in 2018, fans of recently promoted third-division side VfB Oldenburg objected to an AfD state convention with game day banners suggesting that the only way to handle the AfD would be through slide-tackles ("AfD weggrätschen").[58] Both examples show supporters strongly resisting the presence of right-wing parties and sympathizers inside and outside their stadiums. Most notable, however, is how 2022 UEFA Europa League winner Eintracht Frankfurt set off a larger debate and, subsequently, a legal response by the AfD, after club president Peter Fischer formally articulated the sentiments of his club's supporters in the stands who called for the exclusion of members affiliated with the AfD. According to Fischer, club statutes "do not align with support for the party,"[59] highlighting that even in an institutional context – within the 50+1 context of

[56] Arne Koch, "The Paradoxical Reality of Racism: German Soccer and the Irreversibility of Multiculturalism," *Soccer & Society* 24, no. 2 (2022): 139–157, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2022.2042266.

[57] Isabel Roldán, "St. Pauli wear their hearts on the shirt in anti-Nazi fan vote," *AS.com*, December 2, 2020, https://en.as.com/en/2020/12/08/soccer/1607438452_281439.html.

[58] "Unvereinbar," *vfbfueralle.de* (blog), October 28, 2018, http://www.vfbfueralle.de/?m=201810. For an overview of the club management's subsequent discussion of the supporters' game day displays, see Hauke Richters, "Ärger beim VfB Oldenburg. Anti-AfD-Plakate von Fans sorgen für Streit," *Nordwest-Zeitung*, December 7, 2018, https://www.nwzonline.de/fussball/oldenburg-aerger-beim-vfb-oldenburg-anti-afd-plakate-von-fans-sorgen-fuer-streit_a_50,3,1806500368.html.

[59] Klaus Vetter, "AfD und der Fußball. Wie die Bundesliga-Klubs mit rechts außen umgehen," *Der Tagesspiegel*, October 20, 2018, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/sport/afd-und-der-fussball-wie-die-bundesliga-klubs-mit-rechts-aussen-umgehen/23204716.html. Fischer, in general, has a track record of strongly backing his club's supporters as he was also among the first club presidents to side with fans and speak out against Monday games. See "Eintracht-Präsident Fischer will Montagspiele abschaffen."

German soccer always connected to fan stakeowners – political and ethical questions rise to the fore.

Among clubs' willingness to act – against a political party and in support of a club's fan base – Frankfurt's headline-making policy discussion stands out. And while a membership ban has thus far not been adopted by other clubs, fan groups across Germany vocally supported a hands-on approach to fighting the ideology of the AfD and others *inside* stadiums, in contrast to the unwillingness of politicians *outside* stadiums to ban the party. The latter reluctance is notable given that the AfD has been under surveillance by the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) for documented extremist aspirations.[60] In some instances, fans' resistance to a far-right presence has drawn so much attention that the leadership of clubs like Oldenburg and 5th division side Stuttgarter Kickers felt they needed to position themselves publicly at odds with their fans. While club supporters insistently protested the AfD on game days and social media, some boardrooms instead favored political neutrality and noted in official club releases that their statutes demanded impartiality. As Kickers chairman Rainer Lorz observed: "The AfD is not a banned party, you have to tolerate that."[61] As clubs attempted to stay clear of what they deemed political hot topics, claims of neutrality and allusions to the German constitution were not uncommon. Former RB Leipzig coach Ralf Rangnick once fittingly asserted that soccer ought to stay away from political positions, even though representatives of other clubs like Dortmund, Hertha BSC Berlin, and Mainz 05 regularly choose the opposite path and insert their clubs directly into political debates surrounding their arenas.[62] It is striking that while consensus so far appears to be not to remove members for their AfD affiliation – an endeavor now more difficult than just a few years ago, with the party securing more than 30% of the vote in some German state elections and polling at 20% for the 2025 Federal Elections[63] – most Bundesliga club managements nonetheless responded affirmatively in an exchange with

[60] "Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz darf AfD und JA als Verdachtsfall beobachten – Bekanntgabe der Urteilsgründe," Oberverwaltungsgericht für das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen, July 2, 2024, https://www.ovg.nrw.de/behoerde/presse/pressemitteilungen/33_240702/index.php.

[61] Joachim Klumpp, "Steffen Ernle sorgt für Unruhe. Kickers zwischen Aufstieg und AfD," *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, May 7, 2019, https://www.stuttgarter-nachrichten.de/inhalt.steffen-ernle-sorgt-fuer-unruhe-kickers-zwischen-aufstieg-und-afd.dc5eed2c-a48b-4c74-812c-3ad6266e105c.html.

[62] Johannes Kopp, "Fußballvereine gegen die AfD. Die Liga bekennt sich," *taz,* September 29, 2018, https://taz.de/Fussballvereine-gegen-die-AfD/!5536434/.

[63] "Forschungsgruppe Wahlen. Wenn am nächsten Sonntag Bundestagswahl wäre...," *Wahlrecht.de*, December 20, 2024, https://www.wahlrecht.de/umfragen/politbarometer.htm.

the Berlin-based newspaper *taz* and expressed their disapproval of the AfD's extremist positions.[64] This affirmation by club leadership directly reflects and amplifies the political ethics of fans in the stands, despite policy hesitancy or concerns about legal action against the clubs.

This notable disapproval, however, does not mean to suggest that all soccer fans unite in resistance to the AfD or a general rejection of right-wing political parties or groups. There remain ideological differences between fan and ultra groups across Germany. As the debate about Wamangituka's identity has already documented, social media discussions in the context of the Frankfurt policy suggest the opposite, likely stemming from the growing popularity of the AfD. Of course, social media activity can never be seen as fully representative – let alone be definitively identified as fan activity, given the extent to which social media posts often appear with false profiles. At a minimum, though, some social media content props up the AfD and repeats the defense of constitutional rights to political freedom, like the stance taken by TSG Hoffenheim president Peter Hofmann, who has reiterated the AfD's democratically elected position.[65] It is possible that this hesitation all but reaffirms fundamental democratic ideals. Admittedly cynical, but quite possible, it seems a more pragmatic, even economic calculation on the part of the various "politically and religiously neutral" Bundesliga clubs, as Peter Fischer has intimated on a different occasion. Fischer suspects that behind clubs' restraint lie "interests that prevent a clear political stance: soccer is an unbelievably finance-driven business. There are investors, multinational corporations, and sponsors that say: 13 percent of voters (an AfD-election result) buy cars from VW. 13 percent drink Red Bull, 13 percent now and then take an aspirin."[66] With thinly veiled swipes at 50+1 outliers Wolfsburg, Leipzig, and Leverkusen, Fischer's jab is equally directed against corporate club structures and interests in favor of a fan-as-prosumer-driven soccer culture. Yet, it remains an open question whether it is truly an ethical impetus that Frankfurt's club management shares with its fans, and whether those values drive the club to take the lead in combatting the influence of right-wing politics. One

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[64] Ibid. See also "Kein Vereinsverbot für Partei-Mitglieder. Union-Chef Zingler: 'AfD eine Katastrophe' – Kein Verbot für Fans," *Westdeutsche Zeitung*, August 23, 2019, https://www.wz.de/sport/fussball/bundesliga/union-chef-zingler-afd-eine-katastrophe-kein-verbot-fuer-fans_aid-45271333.

[65] "'There won't be Nazis at Eintracht Frankfurt'– German club ban far-right voters," *When Saturday Comes,* April 6, 2018, https://www.wsc.co.uk/stories/there-won-t-be-nazis-at-eintracht-frankfurt-german-club-ban-far-right-voters/.

[66] "'Nazis raus' schlägt Wellen," *Die Welt*, March 5, 2018, https://www.welt.de/print/welt_kompakt/print_sport/article174191149/Nazis-raus-schlaegt-Wellen.html.

cannot ignore the possibility that these actions are instead efforts to reimagine the club as a 'cool' brand of non-conformity and resistance, not unlike St. Pauli.[67] The overwhelmingly positive press for Frankfurt in the months leading up to their Europa League title might suggest that branding as "Fan-nah" [close to its fans] and a "true soccer club" might be near and dear to the club. Even then, it must represent at least in part a commercial (corporate) move of fashioning Frankfurt into a more marketable product and a club that is no longer seen as having a problem with a right-wing fan base.[68]

Indeed, image control, as well as branding and sponsoring, connect to a final example of how German soccer fandom realizes its impact as an important player in political debates. The influence of money from Gulf States and other oil-producing countries on clubs around the world, as well as on the decision-making of soccer associations from the Premier League to FIFA, has, over the last few years, also stirred up the involvement of fans and club members of record Bundesliga champion Bayern Munich.[69] With increasing attention to decade-old partnerships and funding deals with Qatar-based companies, particularly the sponsorship by state-owned Qatar Airways and the club's annual winter training camps in Doha, Bayern fan groups have repeatedly displayed their disapproval. Notably, at the final Bundesliga home game of 2019, Bayern ultras unfurled a large banner in front of their section, the *Südkurve*, condemning the scheduled winter escape: "And again human rights fly away with Kefala Airways!"[70] Chants and banners in the *Südkurve* publicly drew attention to their club's state-airline sponsorship and activities in a country that continues to be cited for perpetrating human rights violations, most notably through the continued abusive migrant worker system known as *Kefala*.[71]

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[67] Kassimeris, "The Politics and Culture of FC St. Pauli," 180.

[68] Rafael Buschmann, "Neo-Nazis and Hooligans Find Common Ground," *Der Spiegel*, November 15, 2013, https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/violent-right-wing-extremists-team-up-with-football-hooligans-a-933896.html.

[69] Salma Thani and Tom Heenan, "The Ball May Be Round but Football Is Becoming Increasingly Arabic: Oil Money and the Rise of the New Football Order," *Soccer & Society* 18, no. 7 (2016): 1012–1026, doi: 10.1080/14660970.2015.1133416.

[70] "Bayern für Katar-Trainingslager in Kritik: 'Menschenrechte fliegen davon,'" *Der Standard,* January 1, 2020, https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000112823607/bayern-fuer-katar-trainingslager-in-kritik-menschenrechte-fliegen-davon.

[71] Justin, "FC Bayern and Qatar: a critical examination," *miasanrot* (blog), February 11, 2011, https://miasanrot.com/fc-bayern-and-qatar-a-critical-examination/#fc-bayern-is-a-global-player-and-not-a-football-club-from-munich. Attacks on LGBTQ+ people, abuse of foreign workers, and other human right violations were also at the heart of the *Boycott Qatar* movement led by German ultras across Germany in the lead up to and during the 2022 FIFA World Cup. As a response to and rejection of sportswashing, this movement exhibited a lot of similarities to the Bayern fans'

Bayern fans brought up different objections as to why their club should immediately halt its business relations with Qatar Airways, ranging from human rights violations to a more romantic sense that corporate priorities move Bayern too far from its roots as a traditional soccer club toward being a global player.[72] These objections, taken together, show that supporter displays were motivated by a combined feeling of traditionalist nostalgia (as "tradition keepers") and a distinct ethical self-understanding. Across the entire German soccer landscape, supporters – inside and outside their stadiums – have shared expectations for their clubs to lead by exemplary behavior, as a 2021 survey about corporate social responsibility in professional soccer reveals. Almost 70% of all surveyed fans, for example, assign the highest importance to the specific category of "discrimination, racism, and human rights" compared to a noticeably smaller number of only 49% who deem their clubs' *general* ethical-moral actions, as such a more nebulous concept, as most important.[73] Both numbers nevertheless speak to supporters' expectations for their clubs to exhibit ethical-moral actions. These numbers correlate to CSR survey findings that show the degree to which fans across Germany value that their favorite clubs orient their policies based on supporter interests. Here, 58.4% of all surveyed fans assign the highest importance to their club's acceptance of supporter input, that is, stakeowner input.[74]

Such involvement took concrete form in Bayern supporters' criticism of their club when a sizeable group of fans, led by Michael Ott, confronted club leadership at the annual general meeting in 2021, leaving behind their stadium protest with Bayern ultras' display of banners targeting then-CEO Oliver Kahn and President Herbert Hainer. On those banners, Kahn and Hainer were depicted laundering bloody garments on behalf of the FC Bayern AG (subtitled "For money, we will launder everything!"). By the membership meeting, however, supporters' visual disapproval turned to chants, switched venues, and evolved into official forms of demonstration and aspirations for participation. At the annual general meeting, provocative chants like "We are Bayern and you are not ... We are the fans you do not want" now constituted another form of expression in the democratic participation of these members – albeit still a threatening one,

rejection of Qatar Airways regarding political organization and an ethical stance, but with its focus on world soccer, it is beyond the scope of this article.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Axel Faix et al., *CSR im Profi-Fußball – Der ideale Club*, October 24, 2021 (preprint), 12–13, doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.19827.86564.

[74] Ibid., 11.

highlighting the rift between fans as stakeowners and club leadership.[75] At least, that is how fans/members had envisioned it. Instead, when 77.8% of the 800 Bayern Munich members in attendance voted for their club to align itself with "internationally acknowledged human rights," the entire club leadership simply voted down their motion, decrying it as illegal.[76] Moreover, Ott was denied the opportunity to share members' concerns when he was barred from addressing the gathering. Fans' objections ultimately failed, as club leadership noted that it was not within members' purview to give input on financial decisions. The board's exertion of power may have won out at this moment. Yet, the supporters' message was important and heard across the soccer world and beyond. Bayern supporters strongly objected to their club's ethically questionable financial alliances and continued to do so.

Without a doubt, Bayern fans' objections – fundamentally representing attacks on the financial privileges of a powerful organization – were cast themselves from a position of privilege. Their protests differed considerably from similar actions by supporters of other, less financially secure German clubs. Protests by FC Augsburg supporters, for example, come to mind, as they successfully forced their club to cancel a lucrative pre-season fixture with Qatari side Al-Duhail SC in July 2022. Citing the Qatari team's proximity to the ruling family and its disregard for values including "diversity, tolerance, and freedom of opinion," the Augsburg supporter alliance Ulrich-Biesinger-Tribüne e.V. not only pressured managing director Stefan Reuter to find a different pre-season opponent (fellow Bundesliga side Schalke 04) but also to declare that the club needed to "set this example" ("dieses Zeichen setzen").[77] For Munich supporters, in contrast, pressure against their club comes, after all, with the knowledge that a side like Bayern, with an annual revenue of more than $640 million (2021), could comfortably forgo what others would consider a lucrative sponsorship contract of $20 million annually (let us call this fans' *financial privilege*). In the end, Munich would still have the means to dominate the Bundesliga, whereas Dortmund, as its closest financial and sporting competitor, generates only half as much with about $320 million – signifying also an *athletic privilege* given

[75] Matt Pearson, "Qatar rift at Bayern Munich escalating," *Deutsche Welle*, November 26, 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/bayern-munich-qatar-rift-between-fans-and-bosses-escalating/a-59946950.

[76] "Bayern Munich AGM Ends in Tumult Over Club's Qatar Sponsorship," *Sports Illustrated*, November 26, 2021, https://www.si.com/soccer/2021/11/26/bayern-munich-agm-qatar-sponsorshi.

[77] "Nach Fanprotesten – FC Augsburg sagt Test gegen Katar-Klub ab," *Der Spiegel*, July 15, 2022, https://www.spiegel.de/sport/fussball/nach-fan-protesten-fc-augsburg-sagt-test-gegen-katar-klub-ab-a-ff0fc69e-7b33-44d9-ae42-0fb6e6993d74.

the ability to attract higher quality talents to Bayern.[78] Whether it is this double privilege or a true ethical impetus that continues to motivate Bayern supporters to push its club toward a commitment to human rights, the issue represents for Bayern fans a red line they are unwilling to cross. It is a line that Ott again underscored on behalf of Munich supporters at a roundtable with club leadership in early July 2022: "If this [the deaths of many in Qatar] hasn't produced a red line for a sponsoring partnership, will there ever be a red line for FC Bayern?"[79] Even if change was not inevitable, as has been suggested to ensure supporter participation in the future,[80] political and public relations pressure remained ever-present and continued to be of interest as much to the fan base as the media. Bayern's financial privilege made it only seem plausible that the lower share of revenues from fan game attendance would result in reduced leverage compared to fan groups of smaller clubs (cf. Augsburg example). With it, the status quo would be left untouched. The completely unexpected announcement by Bayern Munich and Qatar Airways in June 2023 that the sides had mutually agreed to end their long partnership therefore caught most people off guard. An exemplar of sportswashing make-believe,[81] the club's public statement unsurprisingly omitted any mention of supporter groups' objections to Qatari money: "Both partners have actively promoted an exchange between cultures. It has always been the goal of FC Bayern and Qatar Airways to connect people through football, including women's football. Trusting, open exchanges have created friendships that will continue."[82] Still, Michael Ott knew to go on the record and underscore what helped lead to the club's decision: "It was completely unexpected, but it's all the better for it! Many thanks to all supporters who have rallied against the sponsorship. Together we are strong!"[83]

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[78] "Bayern Munich revenue by stream from 2008/09 to 2020/21," *Statista*, June 21, 2022, https://www.statista.com/statistics/250856/revenue-of-bayern-munich-by-stream/; "Sales of Borussia Dortmund from 2008/09 to 2020/21," *Statista*, May 25, 2022, https://www.statista.com/statistics/283045/revenue-of-borussia-dortmund/.

[79] "Runder Tisch zu Katar. 'Wo gibt es dann noch eine rote Linie für den FC Bayern?,'" *Der Spiegel*, July 4, 2022, https://www.spiegel.de/sport/fussball/runder-tisch-zum-katar-sponsoring-des-fc-bayern-muenchen-mit-oliver-kahn-und-kritikern-a-7edf820d-6d5b-46f6-8073-41e04f10d6b8.

[80] Sandy Adam, Sebastian B. Bauers, and Gregor Hovemann, "Inevitable Need for Change – Identifying and Removing Barriers to Supporter Participation in German Professional Football," *Sport in Society* 23, no. 5 (2020): 938–958, doi: 10.1080/17430437.2019.1596082.

[81] Kyle Fruh, Alfred Archer, and Jake Wojtowicz, "Sportswashing: Complicity and Corruption." *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (2022): 101–118, doi: 10.1080/17511321.2022.2107697.

[82] Matt Ford and Matt Pearson, "Bayern Munich end Qatar deal after fan pressure," *Deutsche Welle*, June 28, 2023, https://www.dw.com/en/football-bayern-munich-end-qatar-deal-after-fan-pressure/a-63418536.

[83] Ibid.

Power Politics and the Reality of Fan Influence

The tone deafness and unwillingness by Bayern Munich management to engage members, their subsequent promise of non-binding surveys about what fans might want to see happen, and ultimately even the termination of their sponsorship together suggest that German clubs are, at a minimum, intimately mindful of their fans' influence. Even a club as financially powerful as Munich recognizes the impact that organized fans can have, if not immediately on club policies, then over time on the reputation of the club via incessant displays of their objections and demands. Crucially, these demands are expressed at once in the vernacular of the stadiums and the culture industrial arenas. The examples discussed in this article show some commonalities and allow us to conclude that if fans' expressions for change or action do not clash with their clubs' priorities – as in the example of Frankfurt's evolving understanding and projection as a progressive club or Hamburg and Stuttgart's self-representation as seemingly open-minded and inclusive organizations – then supporter protest and input are not just broadly welcomed. This type of supporter involvement, especially apparent in institutional contexts of club management, can be seen as something that club leadership more than just accepts, but actually solicits. Some clubs utilize their fans' ethical leadership as a way of performing some kind of deferral of its power to the will of its fans *qua* stakeowners. In stark contrast to such a conveniently symbiotic power relationship, this article also considered examples in which fans' political expressions instead depart from club management's interests. Often a result of corporate and financial interest (see Munich, Leipzig, but also smaller organizations like Oldenburg), the power relation at work emphasizes a perceived chasm between fans and management.[84] The persistent expression of fans' political ethics in some instances, however, has shown not only the efficacy of protest inside and outside stadiums but also that, as members and stakeowners, fans have exposed the perceived chasm as much narrower. Nevertheless, the willingness of clubs still to go against or silence fans' expressed wishes, even when they are presented by a democratic majority in

[84] It is important to note that there are also examples of clashes with club management that are not caused by corporate interests and situated on the other end of the political spectrum. An example is third league side FC Hansa Rostock, where club management has tried for years to stem right-wing elements dominating its fan base. For Rostock's management response in one case, see "Nach Ausschreitungen beim FC St. Pauli: Hansa Rostock greift durch," *NDR*, March 5, 2023, https://www.ndr.de/sport/fussball/Nach-Ausschreitungen-beim-FC-St-Pauli-Hansa-Rostock-greift-durch,hansa11146.html.

a club like Bayern Munich, is important even if fans, in the end, come out on top. This stance lets us anticipate more moments of future conflict and disagreement. Exactly what these political clashes might look like, however, may be harder to predict. Difficulties in forecasting the future notwithstanding, Bayern pundits among the ultras have already begun to ponder some scenarios as they worry about their club's vision: "Headwinds [for Oliver Kahn] would be considerable. Perhaps he is already working on [...] completely different goals and visions. Even if they could be unpleasant for quite a few supporters."[85] So long as fans are confronted by management with undesired visions for their clubs, equally undesired political expression by large portions of the fan base will continue to be a part of arenas everywhere. Their resistance will persist despite clubs, for example, already requiring prior approval of banners or punishing fans for certain songs and chants or issuing stadium bans for some others. Even if the "critical football fan" may in fact be in the minority, as Numerato concludes perhaps too pessimistically,[86] fans' voices and constant engagement inside and outside Germany's stadiums are ever-present and, as we have shown, impactful in different ways. Fans' political presence and with it their distinct sense of shared ethics fill German stadiums more than ever; short of banning vocal fans from stadiums, censoring them on social media, and removing their club membership, management across different parts of Germany will continue to feel that presence.

[85] Georg, "Wohin führt Oliver Kahn den FC Bayern," *miasanrot* (blog), July 7, 2022, https://miasanrot.de/wohin-fuehrt-oliver-kahn-den-fc-bayern/.
[86] Numerato, *Football Fans, Activism and Social Change*, 152.

2024 ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE PAG. 71–97
STUDIA TERRITORIALIA 2

OLYMPIC GAMES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: POSSIBLE CHANGE IN GLOBAL SPORT TOWARDS INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTIES?

LÍVIA ŠAVELKOVÁ
UNIVERSITY OF PARDUBICE

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Abstract
Indigenous peoples have appeared at the Olympic Games since the beginning of the twentieth century not only as participants of contemporary "human zoo" performances, but as competitors in regular sport disciplines. Since then, their presence at these mega-events has varied, in relation to local and transnational politics. Although the idea of sport as a tool for development and change has been widely spread through global NGOs and global events, such as the Olympics, sovereignty

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Lívia Šavelková, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Pardubice, Czech Republic. Address correspondence to Univerzita Pardubice, Katedra sociální a kulturní antropologie (KSKA), Studentská 95, CZ-53210 Pardubice 2. E-mail: Livia.Savelkova@upce.cz.

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issues of Indigenous peoples in general remain unsolved. For decades, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) insisted on Rule 50, which banned any sort of political protest during the Olympic Games. Recently, some global sport federations have begun to challenge this rule of the IOC in solidarity with the anti-racist Black Lives Matter movement. This paper seeks to address two main questions: How and if does the presence of the Indigenous peoples shape these largest global sport international events and their organizers? Does the presence of Indigenous peoples at the Olympics lead to potential changes of Olympic discourses related to Indigenous sovereignties? The paper argues that the IOC keeps shaping how Indigenous identities are portrayed, even though Indigenous participants work towards gaining the recognition of Indigenous sovereignties in relation to the Olympic structures.
Keywords: Indigenous peoples; Olympic Games; sport; sovereignty; representation; colonialism
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Introduction

The Indigenous peoples and their representation or absence from the Olympic Games in different periods reflected various ideologies – ethnocentrism, racism, power disputes between capitalist and socialist states, or neoliberalism. However, these Indigenous representations, or simulacra in the Baudrillardian sense,[1] were purposefully presented to various audiences to meet the needs of the predominant ideologies.

Although many outstanding Indigenous athletes look up to participating in the Olympics as the pinnacle of their sporting careers, Indigenous peoples' efforts to gain full recognition and attention for their identities and sovereignties on a global level in the most media-covered sporting competition in the world continues to be limited. One of the main reasons that determines the recognition of Indigenous peoples is the Olympic idea of "political neutrality," which the IOC has enshrined in the Olympic Charter, and which is epitomized by the IOC Rule 50.

In this paper, I look at the Olympic Games in relation to Indigenous peoples, with a deeper emphasis on the IOC Rule 50, using a diachronic perspective. I examine specifically the post-2000 period. I aspire to contribute to debates on structure and agency in social sciences.[2] Drawing on academic texts, media

[1] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1981).

[2] Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1975); Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984); Sherry B. Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006); in relation to Indigenous peoples see Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Young, "Decolonization is not a met-

reports, the IOC regulations, and semi-structured interviews related to lacrosse, I offer a comprehensive picture of the position of Indigenous peoples and their sovereignties within the IOC's operations and discourses related to them.

By using examples of Indigenous peoples from countries other than those of the former British Empire in relation to the Olympics and sport, I extend geographically the knowledge that has been more intensively addressed by academics working on this topic through postcolonial, indigenous and settler colonial studies perspectives in relation to Indigenous peoples in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States.[3] In this text, I also consider as Indigenous peoples those groups that are not necessarily part of settler colonial states, such as the Ainu in Japan or some Pacific Islanders. Therefore, I do not centralize attention on settler colonialism in the text.

Through this analysis of socio-historical contexts, I seek to answer the following questions: How and if does the presence of the Indigenous peoples shape these largest global sport international events and their organizers? Does the presence of Indigenous peoples at the Olympics lead to potential change of Olympic discourses related to Indigenous sovereignties?

Through the involvement of Indigenous peoples in the Olympics in various roles and framings, I show that the structural setting of the IOC determines the position of Indigenous peoples in global sport and thus the discourses that relate to them. Nonetheless, the Indigenous Olympic participants' agency is crucial towards the recognition of Indigenous sovereignties.

To support these claims, the analysis is thematically structured into subblocks that reflect the position of Indigenous peoples in the various networked contexts of the Olympic Movement. First, the presence of Indigenous peoples

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aphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40; Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017). These aforementioned texts on Indigenous peoples deal with agency more in a form of Indigenous decolonizing perspectives, or "political manifestos" and not specifically in Western theoretical approach to the debate about structure and agency.

[3] Christine M. O'Bonsawin, "Olympism at Face Value: The Legal Feasibility of Indigenous-led Olympic Games," in *Decolonizing Sport*, ed. Janice Forsyth et al. (Halifax: Fernwood Press, 2023), 114–134; Janice Forsyth and Kevin B. Wamsley, "Symbols without Substance: Aboriginal Peoples and the Illusion of Olympic Ceremonies," in *Global Olympics: Historical Foundations and Sociological Studies of the Modern Games*, ed. Kevin Young and Kevin B. Wamsley (Oxford: Elsevier Press, 2005), 227–247; Christopher J. Hallinan and Barry Judd, eds., *Indigenous People, Race Relations and Australian Sport* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014); Bevan Erueti, "Mātauranga Māori at the Olympic and Commonwealth Games," *MAI Journal* 3, no. 1 (2014): 60–73.

and the transformation of their roles and agency within the Olympic Games, through different periods of time with their dominant ideologies, is highlighted. Secondly, the Olympic agendas are presented as a fundamental conception of the IOC's efforts that shapes the IOC relationship with Indigenous peoples and its implications, including those relating to their territories affected by the Olympic Games. Third, I address the IOC's policy of forming athletes into its own "Olympic subjects,"[4] which must submit to the idea of "political neutrality" and the representation of nation-states with a clearly defined identity of the individual that is restricted by the IOC Rule 50. Last, I analyze the role of the Olympic Games in the imagination, representation and discourses to which Indigenous peoples are associated. All these perspectives are interconnected and interact to influence the expression and understanding of Indigenous sovereignties.

From "Human Zoos" to Sport Performances and Activism

The modern Olympic Games were conceived of by the French aristocrat Pierre de Coubertin, who promoted the ancient model of amateur sport (or its interpretation of amateur). He believed that the revival of this sporting competition could contribute to a better understanding between nations, thus eliminating warfare. In 1894, he was instrumental in the birth of the International Olympic Committee (Comité International des Jeux Olympiques) – IOC, which became the main organization for hosting the Olympic Games. The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens in 1896.[5]

The status of Indigenous peoples since the beginning of the modern Olympics has been conditioned by the contemporary predominant ideologies of Western and colonizing societies. The IOC's approach towards Indigenous peoples continues to disadvantage them, suppresses their sovereignty, and supports settler colonial nation-states' political interests.[6] So, what has been the position

[4] Thomas Carter, "The Olympics as Sovereign Subject Maker," in *Watching the Olympics*, ed. John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson (London: Routledge, 2011), 55–68.

[5] Susan Brownell, ed., *The 1904 Anthropology Days and Olympic Games: Sport, Race, and American Imperialism* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

[6] O'Bonsawin, "Olympism at Face," 114–134; Christine M. O'Bonsawin, "Free, Prior, and Informed Consent: The Olympic Movement's International Responsibilities to Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and Across the Globe," *Journal of Sport History* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 224–221, doi: 10.5406/jsporthistory.42.2.0200; Christine M. O'Bonsawin, "Indigenous Peoples and Canadian-Hosted Olympic Games," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Sport in Canada: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Issues*, ed. Janice Forsyth and Audrey R. Giles (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 35–63; Christine M. O'Bonsawin, "'No Olympics on Stolen Native Land': Contesting Olympic

of Indigenous peoples at Olympic Games? Indigenous participation in the Olympics has varied from objects represented in "human zoos," to athletes, coaches, performers, cultural advisors, and activists.

Indigenous peoples' first participation as competitors in the modern Olympics was in the first Games ever held outside Europe, in St. Louis in 1904. It was also the first Olympics ever to include non-white athletes. In St. Louis, the marathon runner Seneca Franklin Pierce is considered the first Indigenous Olympian. The organizers of the Games subsumed the Olympics within the World's Fair and in retrospect, in many cases it is very difficult to determine which activities fell squarely under the Olympic Games.[7]

This giant exhibition included a "human zoo," a common practice at the time, that presented ways of life of people from different parts of the world to entertain and educate the dominant society about pre-industrial forms of life. Performances of "primitives" and their ways of life, including various games, to the "civilized" Euro-American public had also been part of previous world exhibitions held in Europe and the USA. These performances reflected contemporary beliefs about the laws of progress, the evolutionary principle of human development and the superiority of Euro-American civilization.

Since the St. Louis Games, the number of Indigenous Olympians has been increasing. At the first Winter Olympics, held in France in 1924, the same year that Native Americans in the United States were granted citizenship, there were representatives of Indigenous peoples. Anishinaabe Clarence John "Taffy" Abel was the captain of the U.S. silver medal-winning ice hockey team. He also carried the American flag at the opening of the Games for all American athletes yet chose during his athletic career to hide his Native American identity for racist reasons.[8] Similarly, many Indigenous athletes have competed in the Paralympic Games since its inception in Rome in 1960. Moreover, it was not only Indigenous athletes who were at the Olympics and Paralympics, but also coaches and cultural advisors.

However, the involvement of Indigenous athletes at the Olympics has always reflected the national and local policies of the states within which Indigenous

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Narratives and Asserting Indigenous Rights within the Discourse of the 2010 Vancouver Games," *Sport in Society* 13, no. 1 (January 2010): 143–156, doi: 10.1080/17430430903377987.

7 Brownell, *The 1904 Anthropology Days*, 3; Nancy J. Parezo and Don D. Fowler, *Anthropology Goes to the Fair: The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

8 Dana Hedgpeth, "The first Native American in the Winter Olympics hid his identity to stay safe," *The Washington Post*, February 16, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2022/02/16/taffy-abel-native-american-winter-olympics/.

peoples have lived. They were often subjected to discrimination, marginalization and "social engineering" in the name of progress and assimilation. As a result of the assimilationist policies of many countries, the Indigenous identities of Olympic and Paralympic athletes have also often gone unspoken and unrecognized for a long time.[9]

The political interests of nation states were also expressed in the Olympic movement through the National Olympic Committees. The Olympic Charter declares, "The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity" (Art. 2), while "the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (Art. 6).[10] Yet the history of the modern Olympic Games has shown repeatedly that discrimination – not only on the basis of race,[11] but also on other criteria such as gender or class – has been part of the Games.[12]

One of the most famous cases in relation to Indigenous peoples relates to Jim Thorpe, the legendary Native American athlete, who is the only competitor to date to have won gold medals in both the pentathlon and decathlon at the Olympics. Thorpe is regularly ranked in the top ten of all American athletes in American polls.[13] Upon his return with gold Olympic medals from the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, he was lauded by the American media and was hailed as a national hero. According to Rubinfeld, Thorpe's victory contributed to the propagation of two myths – the physical superiority of Americans and racial

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[9] Alistair Harvey, Gary Osmond, and Murray Phillips, "What a 'forgotten' Torres Strait Island Paralympian teaches us about representation, achievement and history," *The Conversation*, September 2, 2024, https://theconversation.com/what-a-forgotten-torres-strait-island-paralympian-teaches-us-about-representation-achievement-and-history-232587.

[10] IOC, *Olympic Charter* (Lausanne: IOC, 2024), 8–9.

[11] A notorious discrimination case is the exclusion of many athletes from the 1936 Berlin Olympics. See Paul Taylor, *Jews and the Olympic Games: The Clash Between Sport and Politics* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004).

[12] One example of this can be seen in the absence of women as athletes at the Olympic Games since the beginning. De Coubertin himself did not support their involvement. See Lincoln Allison, "The Ideals of the Founding Father: Mythologized, evolved or betrayed?" in *Watching the Olympics: Politics, Power and Representation*, ed. John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson (London: Routledge, 2011), 18–35.

[13] Ellen J. Staurowsky, "Getting Beyond Imagery: The Challenges of Reading Narratives About American Indian Athletes," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 23, no. 2 (March 2006): 190–212, doi: 10.1080/09523360500478240.

inclusion in the United States. At the time, however, eugenics greatly dominated the U.S. immigration policy, and Native Americans did not have American citizenship.[14] Thorpe did not enjoy his Olympic glory for long. In 1913, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) accused him of violating the rules of amateur sports because he had played two summers on a semi-professional baseball team. In fact, the prevailing belief in Anglo-Saxon countries was in the morality of gentlemanly sport, which emphasized only athletic success and condemned any other form of reward for athletic performance. Amateur sport was associated with elites and school leavers who could economically afford to play sport in their leisure time in line with the ideology of individual and national development. Professional athletes, who made a living from sport to varying degrees, were viewed with disdain by amateurs. However, from the beginning of the Olympics, despite ongoing discussions on the subject, only amateurs were officially allowed to participate, and the amateurism requirement, although unfulfilled, was not abolished until the second half of the 1980s.[15] Thus, the AAU alerted the IOC and Thorpe's medals were stripped and his record of achievement was expunged. After his death, it became clear that the withdrawal of the medals was in violation of the rules of the 1912 Olympics, and the IOC decided to return the medals in 1982 and to list him as a co-gold medalist 30 years after his death.[16] Then in 2020, a petition was launched by Native American organization Bright Path Strong to recognize Jim Thorpe as the sole winner at the 1912 Olympics, which was strongly supported by 1964 Indigenous Olympic gold medalist, Lakota Billy Mills. In 2022 the IOC voted for and reinstated Thorpe as the only winner.[17]

One very well-known example of an expression of proudness on Indigenous identity is the gesture of Kanien'keha:ka Alwyn Morris, the first Indigenous

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[14] Mark Rubinfeld, "The Mythical Jim Thorpe: Re/presenting the Twentieth Century American Indian," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 23, no. 2 (March 2006): 167–189, doi: 10.1080/09523360500478224.

[15] A major milestone was the 1986 Lausanne Olympic Congress, which lifted the ban on professional athletes in the Olympics. Matthew P. Llewellyn and John Gleaves, *The Rise and Fall of Olympic Amateurism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

[16] "The Final Saga of the Jim Thorpe Restoration," AAU, September 23, 2022, https://aausports.org/news.php?news_id=1987797; James Ring Adams, "The Jim Thorpe Backlash: The Olympic Medals Debacle and the Demise of Carlisle," *American Indian* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 22–26, 32.

[17] "IOC to display the name of Jim Thorpe as sole Stockholm 1912 pentathlon and decathlon gold medallist," *IOC News*, July 15, 2022, https://olympics.com/ioc/news/ioc-to-display-the-name-of-jim-thorpe-as-sole-stockholm-1912-pentathlon-and-decathlon-gold-medallist; "Honors Restored: Justice for Jim Thorpe! Olympic Wins Fully Reinstated by IOC on 110th Anniversary," Bright Path Strong, July 15, 2022, https://brightpathstrong.org/justice-for-jim-thorpe/.

Canadian athlete who won a gold medal (with Hugh Fisher) in speed double kayak race in Olympics in Los Angeles in 1984. After winning, Morris raised an eagle feather above his head on the podium. Morris used this gesture to pay tribute to his late grandfather, who died before he could see his achievements. At the same time, he wanted to share his victory with all of Canada's Indigenous peoples and to demonstrate his Indigenous identity to Canadians.[18] This act has been compared to the anti-racist, "Black Power salute" of Afro-American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who famously raised gloved fists above their heads while on the podium in 1968 in Mexico. The "Black Power salute," supported on the podium by white Australian Peter Norman, is considered to be one of the most famous political statements in modern Olympic history.[19]

Another famous case of athlete activism is Catherine Freeman, who became one of the symbols of the 2000 Sydney Olympics. She was the last member of the Olympic torch relay at the opening ceremony. She later won the 400 meters at the same stadium. Freeman was a great critic of the contemporary Australian government, which refused to apologize for the practice of forcibly removing 100,000 Aboriginal children from their families from 1910 into the 1970s. Freeman was supposed to symbolically embody reconciliation between white Australians and Aboriginal peoples. After winning, Freeman carried the Australian and Aboriginal flags during the victory lap. Although the Aboriginal flag, like that of the Torres Strait Islanders, has been recognized in Australia as official since 1995, it is not considered a national flag by the IOC. Any use of a non-approved standard is prohibited during the Olympic Games. Although the Aboriginal flag flew in Sydney in 2000, Aboriginal boxer Damien Hooper was nearly disqualified at the 2012 London Olympics for entering the ring wearing a T-shirt bearing the flag of Aboriginal Australia. The IOC accused him of violating the Olympic Charter, specifically Rule 50, which prohibits political, religious, and racial demonstrations in the Olympic venues.[20] The matter was referred to the

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[18] Christine M. O'Bonsawin, "From Black Power to Indigenous Activism: The Olympic Movement and the Marginalization of Oppressed Peoples (1968–2012)," *Journal of Sport History* 42, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 200–219, doi:10.5406/jsporthistory.42.2.0200.

[19] Jules Boykoff, "Protest, Activism, and the Olympic Games: An Overview of Key Issues and Iconic Moments," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 34, no. 3–4 (2017): 162–183, doi: 10.1080/09523367.2017.1356822.

[20] The Bye-law to Rule 50 states that "no form of publicity or propaganda, commercial or otherwise, may appear on persons, on sportswear, accessories or, more generally, on any article of clothing or equipment whatsoever worn or used by all competitors, team officials, other team personnel and all other participants in the Olympic Games, except for the identification [...] of the manufacturer of the article or equipment concerned, provided that such identification shall not be marked conspicuously for advertising purposes." See IOC, *Olympic Charter*, 95.

Australian Olympic Committee (AOC). According to the AOC, Hooper regretted his act and apologized despite expressing in the media that he was proud to be an Aboriginal man.[21]

However, the willingness of Indigenous athletes to declare their identities to the wider public and to show their opposition to any form of discrimination has increased with the new millennium, especially in its second decade. Many athletes at the Olympics show pride in their identity and try to bring attention to their homelands and their specific issues. In 2014, Yupic Olympian snowboarder Callan Chythlook-Sifsoff, considered the first ever Alaska Native athlete to compete in the Winter Olympics, came out as a lesbian on the global sports broadcaster ESPN and expressed her belief that some of the Olympic athletes would surely protest publicly during the 2014 Sochi Olympics.[22] In Sochi, after winning the gold, Sámi Nordic skier Håvard Klemetsen yoiked to show respect and gratitude for the support of his Sámi community.[23] Expressing his local-cultural identity, taekwondo athlete Pita Taufatofua of Tonga drew media and virtual attention to himself when his oiled body glowed as he carried the Tonga flag dressed only in a ta'ovala – a Tonga skirt – during the opening ceremony in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. By the end of the week, Google had recorded 230 million searches for the keyword *Where is Tonga*, while at the same time there was a huge increase in interest in buying coconut oil from the Pacific islands.[24] Taufatofua stepped out again wearing only a Tonga skirt in the cold weather for the opening of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, where he was the only Tonga representative – this time in the cross-country skiing event. At that time, he was also already a UNICEF ambassador. However, Taufatofua did not hear any condemnation from the IOC for his attire, despite being repeatedly told that he should wear "appropriate" clothing.[25]

Taufatofua and other Indigenous Olympians are responding to environmental issues. Taufatofua has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in relief for the

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[21] O'Bonsawin, "From Black Power," 201.

[22] Beth Bragg, "Sochi Report, Alaska edition: Callan comes out, Team Asterisk adds 2 more members," *Anchorage Daily News*, February 8, 2014, https://www.adn.com/national-sports/article/sochi-report-alaska-edition-callan-comes-out-team-asterisk-adds-2-more-members/2014/02/08/.

[23] Eivind Å. Skille, *Indigenous Sport and Nation-Building: Interrogating Sámi Sport and Beyond* (Routledge: Abingdon and New York, 2022), 97.

[24] Susan Chenery, "The incredible story of Pita Taufatofua, Tonga's shirtless Olympic flag bearer," *The Guardian*, January 2, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2019/jan/02/the-incredible-story-of-pita-taufatofua-tongas-shirtless-olympic-flag-bearer.

[25] Ibid.

people of Tonga whose homes had been destroyed by tsunami after a devastating volcanic blast in 2022. Weightlifter David Katoatau and flag bearer from Kiribati gained media attention in the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics with his dancing and smiling face despite sporting failure. Katoatau dances at all the weightlifting championships, purposely drawing attention to the issue of climate change, which has his country on the brink of total ocean inundation.[26]

Other Indigenous Olympians have been at the forefront of foundations to support education and youth sports, such as Cathy Freeman and Alwyn Morris. Other Olympians, such as Northern Cheyenne Ben Nighthorse Campbell or Gwich'in Roger T. Allen, have entered politics at the local, national, and international levels since the 1980s. In 2013, Olympian Nova Maree Peris became the first ever Aboriginal woman elected to the Australian Parliament. Many Indigenous Olympians and Paralympians have become role models for young people in their communities and nationally. They are influencing younger generations through social media. Yet, a number of Olympians and Paralympians have still not received global attention, as is evident from the absence of their names in one of the first lists of online information, Wikipedia.[27] Nevertheless, it appears that the subalterns are finally starting to speak out loudly through the Olympics.[28]

The IOC Olympic Agendas and Their Impacts on Indigenous Peoples

Individual expressions of athletes' disagreement with certain ideologies, expressions of their collective Indigenous identity, or certain causes, such as the Thorpe case, have gained the attention of the media and the organizers of specific Olympics. However, the IOC only began to address Indigenous peoples as a group in the context of the international community's growing concern for the environment and for Indigenous peoples' rights. These concerns have only

[26] Uri Friedman, "The Saddest Olympic Celebration: What do you do when you're competing for a country that might disappear? You dance," *The Atlantic*, August 17, 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/08/david-katoatau-olympics-kiribati/496175/.

[27] Victoria Paraschak, "# 87: Reconciliation, Sport History, and Indigenous Peoples in Canada," *Journal of Sport History* 46, no. 2 (2019): 208–223; Murray G. Phillips, "Wikipedia and History: A Worthwhile Partnership in the Digital Era?," *Rethinking History* 20, no. 4 (2015): 523–543, doi: 10.1080/13642529.2015.1091566.

[28] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 271–313.

been gradually addressed since the 1970s and only developed more intensively since the 1990s.

In 1999, the IOC adopted the Olympic Movement's Agenda 21: Sport for Sustainable Development strategic plan. This plan focused on combining sport with sustainable development and environmental protection, and was based on the United Nations Agenda 21, which was adopted in 1992. Among other issues, the IOC's plan declared its commitment to recognition and promotion of Indigenous populations.[29] The IOC Agenda 21 did not impose any obligation on Olympic organizers, but it did put pressure on host cities to develop collaboration with Indigenous groups. As O'Bonsawin points out, Vancouver, which hosted the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, became the first ever venue to adopt the IOC Agenda 21 items.[30] The Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) attempted to implement it by creating the Aboriginal Participation and Collaboration program initiative. This led to an agreement between VANOC and Indigenous partners in Canada. It was the first such arrangement in the history of the Olympic Games and the first time that the IOC recognized an Indigenous group as an official Olympic partner. Yet in 2010, a public campaign – No Olympics on Stolen Native Land! – was launched. It sought to point out that the Games were being held on land in British Columbia that the Indigenous peoples had never surrendered by treaty. In support of Indigenous claims to territory, many Indigenous communities across Canada protested the staging of the Games in Vancouver, and some expressed their opposition by refusing to carry the Olympic torch across their reservations and territories.[31]

However, Indigenous peoples were dropped from the Olympic movement's agenda in 2014 and replaced with "clean athletes" in the Olympic Agenda 2020.[32] Although the IOC claims that the adoption of Agenda 2020 is a milestone in the deeper integration of human rights issues,[33] even its successor Olympic Agenda 2020+5, adopted in 2021, does not explicitly mention Indigenous peoples. Agenda 2020+5 and the IOC Strategic Framework on Human Rights accepted in 2022 work with the concept of "marginalized groups," under which it includes racial and ethnic groups alongside LGBT+, children, migrant workers, and refugees.

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[29] IOC. Sport and Environment Commission, "Olympic Movement's Agenda: Sport for sustainable development," 1999, 42, 45.
[30] O'Bonsawin, "Indigenous Peoples," 53.
[31] Ibid., 57.
[32] O'Bonsawin, "Free, Prior, and Informed Consent," 233.
[33] IOC, *IOC Strategic Framework on Human Rights* (Lausanne: IOC, 2022), 4–7.

Like other marginalized groups, Indigenous athletes are affected by Olympic classifications. Moreover, Indigenous communities, possibly labelled "Olympic related communities,"[34] are also affected by Olympic discourses beyond the Games themselves.

Major protests in relation to human rights in general and Indigenous rights more specifically took place during the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics. A destabilized Brazil sought to limit solutions to demarcate territories belonging to Indigenous peoples guaranteed by the 1988 Constitution as agricultural and mining lobbies pushed to advance their interests in these territories. Brazilian Indigenous peoples and other activists claimed violations of the 1988 Constitution and the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). At the same time, many organizations pointed to the increase in the murder of Indigenous people and environmentalists, which were expected to rise to 150 since the previous 2012 London Olympics.[35] Activists sought to gain media attention, undermining the positive multicultural image of the country presented to the global public in preparation for the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games. For the World Cup, three children, representing Brazil's diverse phenotypical makeup, were selected to release doves of peace during the opening ceremony. Guaraní boy Werá Jeguaka Mirim, after releasing his dove pulled out a hidden banner *Demarcação Já!* [reading Demarcation Now!]. The sign referred to the need for an immediate solution to the demarcation of Indigenous peoples' territories. One of the central themes of the protests, repressively pushed as far away as possible from the event itself, was thus brought right into the center of the event in front of the cameras of the world's media.[36] This consciousness raising act attracted the support of the global public through the media. Similar acts occurred during the 2016 Rio Olympics. On the one hand, the media carried harmonious images of Yawalapiti athlete Kamukaika Lappo carrying the burning Olympic torch, while on the other hand, the media also covered the complaints of the Guaraní-Kaiowá of Mato Grosso do Sul, who have long faced violent raids by border guards and land grabs.[37] The selection of the Yawalapiti group,

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[34] Ibid., 23.

[35] "Olympics host Brazil is the most dangerous country in the world for environmental activism: 150 environmental defenders murdered there since the 2012 Olympics," Global Witness, August 4, 2016, https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/olympics/.

[36] "Kunumi MC, the indigenous rapper protecting his people's land," *BBC*, January 12, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-latin-america-42653619.

[37] "Lighting the way to Rio Games," *The Straits Times*, May 5, 2016, https://www.straitstimes.com/multimedia/photos/lighting-the-way-to-rio-games; Sandra Cuffe, "Olympics begins amid rising violence against Brazil's indigenous people," *Eco-Business,* August 5, 2016, https://www

one of the Indigenous groups inhabiting Parque Indígena do Xingu [the Xingu Indigenous Park], in addition to stereotyping its inhabitants as "typical colorful" Indigenous inhabitants of the Brazilian Amazon, also provided a symbol of Brazil's "humane policy" towards Indigenous peoples. Media attention focused on athletes from this area has heavily obscured many other cases in which Brazilian Indigenous peoples face the threat of genocide and ecocide.

Although the Indigenous peoples are not explicitly mentioned in the latest IOC Agenda 2020+5, they are still explicitly counted on in relation to human rights and inclusion for at least one future Olympics. Organizers for the 2032 Brisbane Games are committed to "[f]acilitate the awareness and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples [...] within Brisbane 2032 event planning and delivery."[38] Further, the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games Organizing Committee should be the first in Olympic and Paralympic history to deliver a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).[39] "The Olympic and Paralympic Games Brisbane 2032 will showcase the diversity and talent of First Nations communities leaving a legacy that will continue to shine bright for generations to come."[40] It is common for organizing committees to interpret the social inclusion of Indigenous peoples as representatives of marginalized groups as cultural showcasing, but what is really missing is an emphasis on long-term initiatives in legacy shaping processes created with and led by Indigenous peoples that would aspire to real social change.[41]

Historically, visible Indigenous participation in most Olympics was reduced to cultural performances in the opening and closing ceremonies.[42]

.eco-business.com/news/olympics-begins-amid-rising-violence-against-brazils-indigenous-people/.

38 "Human Rights and Brisbane 2032," IOC, https://olympics.com/en/brisbane-2032/the-games/impact-and-legacy/human-rights/, accessed September 1, 2024.

39 "First Nations and Brisbane 2032," IOC, https://olympics.com/en/brisbane-2032/the-games/impact-and-legacy/first-nations/, accessed September 1, 2024.

40 Ibid.

41 Dilara Valiyeva, Anna-Maria Strittmatter, and Inge Hermanrud, "Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in Olympic legacy-shaping Processes," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 59, no. 8 (2024): 1223, 1226, doi: 10.1177/10126902241253856.

42 Helen Gilbert, "'Let the Games Begin': Pageants, Protests, Indigeneity (1968–2010)," in *The Politics of Interweaving Performance Cultures: Beyond Postcolonialism*, ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte, Torsten Jost, and Saskya Iris Jain (New York: Routledge, 2014), 156–175; Janice Forsyth, "Teepees and Tomahawks: Aboriginal Cultural Representation at the 1976 Olympic Games," in *The Global Nexus Engaged: Past, Present, Future Interdisciplinary Olympic Studies – Sixth International Symposium for Olympic Research*, ed. Kevin B. Wamsley, Robert Knight Barney, and Scott G. Martyn (London, ON: University of Western Ontario, 2002), 71–78; O'Bonsawin, "Free, Prior, and Informed Consent," 225; "No Olympics," 144.

These performances tended to express the cultural diversity or multiculturalism of the organizing state. Indigenous peoples, if they were included at all, were usually given the role of representing the first inhabitants of the territory and their cultural characteristics are conceived as part of the distinctiveness of the host country. However, these representations essentially confirm the "exoticism" of the Indigenous peoples and do not reveal much deeper features of social and power relations. They reflect not only the relationship of a particular host state to the Indigenous peoples living within its borders, but also the ties of the members of the IOC to individual states (or their National Olympic Committees) and, at the same time, their attitudes towards Indigenous peoples in general. These are also reflected in the very willingness and extent of the host state's potential involvement of Indigenous peoples in the overall choreography and self-representation.

Although Indigenous peoples have been included to varying degrees in the opening ceremonies at the Olympic Games in Canada, Norway, the USA, Australia, and Brazil, this is not guaranteed. The 2020 Tokyo Olympics, postponed due to pandemic COVID-19 to 2021, intended a performance by the Ainu, the Indigenous peoples from Hokkaido. Japan has long considered itself an ethnically homogeneous state, and the Ainu have been severely discriminated against for over 100 years. It was not until 2019 that Japan officially recognized them as its Indigenous people. Although the Ainu were expected to perform at the opening ceremony, the organizers of the 2020 Tokyo Games announced in 2020 that the Ainu dance was dropped from the program. After lengthy negotiations, the Ainu dances were performed in the opening ceremonies at the Sapporo venue of the Tokyo Olympics, where some events were controversially moved from Tokyo.[43]

Olympic Agendas can contribute to transforming policies and discourses. In the context of the 2024 Paris Olympics, the IOC has boasted of achieving gender equality as a result of meeting the goals of Agenda 2020 that positioned gender equality as a priority.[44] Therefore, the removal of Indigenous peoples from these IOC Agendas highlights that although the IOC declares an interest in supporting

[43] Kanako Uzawa, Jeff Gayman, and Fumiya Nagai, "Japan," in *The Indigenous World 2022*, ed. Dwayne Mamo (IWGIA, 2022), 220–233; Yumi Oba, "Japan's Indigenous people to perform at Olympics, after being dropped from the opening ceremony," *SBS Japanese*, August 3, 2021, https://www.sbs.com.au/language/japanese/en/article/japans-indigenous-people-to-perform-at-olympics-after-being-dropped-from-the-opening-ceremony/ge2h8ebh0.

[44] "#GenderEqualOlympics: Paris 2024 making history on the field of play," *IOC News*, July 28, 2024, https://www.olympics.com/ioc/news/genderequalolympics-paris-2024-making-history-on-the-field-of-play.

marginalized groups, alternative collective identities for the "Western world" do not have a full place in it. Therefore, Indigenous peoples are left with the role of entertainment performers, if they fit into the unifying representation of national identities of individual states.

Nation-states and the Indigenous Identities in Olympic Contexts

What does the participation or non-participation of Indigenous athletes in the Olympic Games tell us about the Indigenous sovereignties and about the Olympic movement as an ideological current enabling social change, which was one of the main intentions of its founder de Coubertin? The current principle of representation is based on the representation of individual states, not nations in the ethnic sense. In the early days of the Olympic Games, however, various nations were represented at the Games, as evidenced by the establishment of the Czech Olympic Committee in 1899/1900. Their efforts enabled Czech athletes to participate in the Olympics under variously defined identities that evoked their ethnic distinctiveness during the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[45] Over time, however, the Olympic requirement for representation of nation-states became established as a result of the consolidation of nationalism in conjunction with a state-based territorial framework. According to Quijano, the nation-state is the colonial European product that has disrupted pre-existing political structures and indigenous forms of governance and replaced them with systems based on European models of centralized power, in which the nation dominates as an expression of identity and loyalty of the state.[46] Indigenous peoples, in the role of active athletes in the Olympics, are thus limited by the requirement to declare their identity only in relation to the specific internationally recognized state entity they supposedly represent – an entity whose practices and unresolved treaty obligations towards groups living within its borders they may not agree with, and to which they may not consider themselves citizens.

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[45] Czechs were part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy until 1918, when the independent Czechoslovak Republic was established. At the 1912 Olympics, the Czech national team could march with a small distance behind the Austrian team with a sign with the French inscription *Autriche Tchéques* and two flags – the Czech lion and the Austrian black and yellow colors. In case of victory of the Czech athlete, both flags – the Austrian-Hungarian and the Czech red and white – were to fly. For more on this topic see Marek Waic, *Tělovýchova a sport ve službách české národní emancipace* (Praha: Karolinum, 2014), 140–178.

[46] Aníbal Quijano and Michael Ennis, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, No. 3 (2000): 533–580.

Thus, for many outstanding Haudenosaunee/Iroquois lacrosse players, the required choice of representing either the USA or Canada may mean a voluntary non-participation in the greatest global sporting event, where lacrosse returns in 2028. This politics of refusal has been practiced by the Haudenosaunee people who are divided by state border between the USA and Canada, and who have been expressing their resistance not merely to colonial structures, but are instead deeply embedded in ongoing, active practices of sovereign life that exist beyond colonial borders.[47]

However, the current conceptualization of the athlete with only one possible identity, and that is in relation to the state they represent, also means for those who feel proud to be its citizens the suppression of the other layers of their identity. Thus, any declaration of attachment to the identity of a particular Indigenous group – for example, the Aboriginal flag worn by Hooper, which does not necessarily conflict with the self-identification of the athlete in question as a citizen of the state being represented – is considered by the IOC's criteria to be a political gesture that is incompatible with the established order, and thus threatens the conceptualization of nation-states as a fundamental criterion for participation in the Olympic Games. The potential penalties for breaching the criteria are high. As the responsibility for infringement of them tends to be shifted to specific National Olympic Committees, athletes' potential "political activism" may play a role in the consideration of their selection to the national team, regardless of their sporting performance. This was the case for the 1968 Black Power salute sympathizer, Australian Peter Norman, who was not selected by his NOC for the 1972 Olympics despite having qualifying times.[48]

The rules of representation, with the necessity of belonging to a particular internationally recognized state, tend to perpetuate the existing order in which powerful states, such as the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand that have subjected many groups to colonization and humiliation, form and

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[47] Audra Simspon, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014); *Lakros – to je způsob života/Lacrosse It's a Way of Life*, directed by Lívia Šavelková, Tomáš Petráň, and Milan Durňak (2011, 63 min; Czech Republic, bilingual); *V domovině lakrosu/In the Homeland of Lacrosse*, directed by Lívia Šavelková and Milan Durňak (2024, 110 min; Czech Republic).

[48] Steve Georgakis, "Sprinter Norman receives apology 44 years later," *SBS*, October 13, 2012, https://www.sbs.com.au/news/sprinter-norman-receives-apology-44-years-later. Similarly, the outstanding Czechoslovak gymnast Věra Čáslavská fell out of favor with the ruling communist establishment after she protested the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops in August 1968 by turning her head away from the Soviet flag and looking at the ground during the Soviet anthem on the same Olympics as Norman in Mexico City 1968.

maintain the rules of the Games.[49] However, a certain exception to the established IOC order is Taiwan, which the IOC allows to perform under the name of Chinese Taipei and whose anthem may not be played. Another major exception to national representation in recent times was offered by the IOC by allowing a team made up of refugees mostly from Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and South Sudan to compete for the first time in the 2016 Olympics. The refugee team was also part of the 2020 Tokyo Games and the 2024 Paris Games.[50] The one-off exception of flying the Aboriginal flag at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, alongside the Australian flag, which was intended at the time to symbolize Australia's quest for reconciliation, demonstrates the reluctance of the Olympic movement to engage in decolonization and the pursuit of the ideals of humanism.[51]

Recently, however, pressure to transform the IOC's rigid rules have also arisen from representatives of these settler colonial nation states. Since 2023, top U.S. and Canadian officials such as U.S. President Joe Biden, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Canadian Minister of Sport and Physical Activity Carla Dawn Qualtrough have successively expressed support for Haudenosaunee lacrosse participation in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.[52]

Whether the Haudenosaunee Nationals, formerly Iroquois Nationals, will be allowed to play in the Olympics remains unclear. According to the Olympic Charter and the IOC's 2023 statement, they do not meet the conditions for participation.[53] But the matter is not yet definitively decided. The specific statuses of the IOC refugee team, as well as Palestine, Puerto Rico, and Hong Kong, which are participating in the Olympics, could inspire the IOC possible inclusion of the Haudenosaunee. As early as 2015, Oren Lyons, one of the founders of the Haudenosaunee Nationals, and one of the Indigenous leaders who helped to establish the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, an advisory body to

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[49] O'Bonsawin, "From Black Power," 215.

[50] "Refugee Olympic Team," IOC, https://olympics.com/en/olympic-refuge-foundation/refugee-team, accessed August 6, 2024.

[51] O'Bonsawin, "From Black Power," 215.

[52] Lexie Schapitl, "Biden backs an Indigenous lacrosse team for the 2028 Olympics. It's an uphill fight," *NPR*, December 7, 2023, https://www.npr.org/2023/12/06/1217564234/biden-indigenous-lacrosse-olympics; John Chidley-Hill, "Canada's sport minister supports Haudenosaunee bid to play lacrosse at 2028 Olympics," The National Post, December 6, 2023, https://nationalpost.com/pmn/sports-pmn/canadas-sport-minister-supports-haudenosaunee-bid-to-play-lacrosse-at-2028-olympics; Justin Trudeau (@JustinTrudeau), "Canada supports the Haudenosaunee Nationals," *X*, February 16, 2024, 12:04 p.m., https://x.com/JustinTrudeau/status/1758266093678838268.

[53] Schapitl, "Biden backs."

the Geneva-based United Nations Human Rights Commission, claimed that if lacrosse returns to the Olympics, the Haudenosaunee from whom lacrosse originated must be "the No. 1 team" there.[54]

To fulfill Olympic Charter, Article 2, the IOC can take an approach similar to that of individual sports federations that recognize the contribution of Indigenous peoples to the specific sport. This is particularly evident in those cases where originally Indigenous activities have been turned into sport. These include World Lacrosse (WL), which has recognized Haudenosaunee/Iroquois as a team at its World Championships since 1988, or the International Surfing Association (ISA), under which Hawaiian surfers can represent Hawaii and not necessarily the USA.[55] However, the IOC has adhered to its regulations. When surfing was introduced to the Olympics in 2021, Carissa Kainani Moore, who became the first woman to win an Olympic gold medal in surfing, had to compete for the USA, despite regularly representing Hawaii under ISA rules.[56] So far, the IOC is not structurally supportive of Indigenous peoples.

However, Indigenous peoples' multilayered identities, as illustrated by the case of Cathy Freeman in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, can be seen from another perspective: not as the pragmatic impact of the "social engineering" of a particular state's policy towards its Indigenous populations, but as a certain crucial moment of specific "local" relations and the possibility of their adjustment also on an international, i.e. transnational, global scale. If we accept the thesis that events of such a scale as the Olympics become strategic symbols to communicate a paradigm shift indicating the arrival of a new era and at the same time marking a renewal at the highest possible global visibility,[57] then the presence of Indigenous peoples at these events can also be perceived in a different way. The appearance of thousands of Indigenous Australians at the Sydney opening ceremony also marks a belief and possibility in the readjust-

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[54] Oren Lyons, interview with author, September 25, 2015. *V domovině lakrosu / In the Homeland of Lacrosse*, directed by Lívia Šavelková and Milan Duňák (2024, 110 min; Czech Republic, bilingual).

[55] "ISA Member nations," The International Surfing Association (ISA), https://isasurf.org/become-a-member/member-directory/#country_H, accessed October 6, 2024.

[56] Alina Bykova, "Indigenous Hawaiian Wins Gold in Tokyo at First-Ever Olympic Surfing Event," *Native News Online*, July 29, 2021, https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/indigenous-hawaiian-wins-women-s-gold-in-tokyo-at-first-ever-olympic-surfing-event.

[57] Andrew Smith, "Theorising the Relationship between Major Sport Events and Social Sustainability," *Journal of Sport & Tourism* 14, no. 2–3 (2010): 109–120, doi: 10.1080/14775080902965033; David Black, "The Symbolic Politics of Sport Mega-Events: 2010 in Comparative Perspective," *Politikon* 34, no. 3 (2007): 261–276, doi: 10.1080/02589340801962536.

ment of prevailing relations, not only by Indigenous peoples but also by many members of the majority society who fundamentally disagree with the practices of colonization.[58]

How protests are suppressed are also a crucial statement about the practices of power in relation to the Olympics. Although protests against the Olympics may have transnational features,[59] I would argue they are always glocal, not only in terms of the activists themselves, but also when they are regulated or totally suppressed by the host states.[60] The protests by Indigenous peoples and other activists against the 2010 Olympics in British Columbia are not identical to the protests against the 2008 Olympics in China, in which many Tibetans and their supporters were severely repressed by state authorities. Pointing to human rights abuses in China and criticism of the awarding of the Olympics to that state, or rather to the Chinese Olympic Committee, also for Winter Olympics in 2022, leading to the diplomatic boycott of many states, was then countered with the IOC argument that the Olympic Games are non-political.[61] Olympic opening ceremonies and Olympic protests take on specific local meanings associated with pride, resistance, and the expression of local and global arrangements through media transmission to other parts of the world. For many of the colonized, those meanings can signify a similar hope and similar experiences.

The IOC Rule 50 and the "Political Neutrality" of Sport

We can also look at the Olympics through the concept of governance. Although the Olympic Games declare themselves to be non-political, this is not in line with practice. The IOC claims sovereignty over global sport by

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[58] Gilbert, "'Let the Games," 156–175. The term "Indigenous Australians" is used in this paper to refer to Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

[59] O'Bonsawin, "The Olympics Do," 227–255; Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, *Olympic Industry Resistance: Challenging Olympic Power and Propaganda* (Albany: SUNY, 2008); M. Patrick Cottrell and Travis Nelson, "Not just the Games? Power, protest and politics at the Olympics," *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 4 (December 2010): 729–753, doi: 10.1177/1354066110380965.

[60] I see glocalization in accordance with Roudometof as "globalization refracted through the local, where the local is not annihilated, absorbed, or destroyed by globalization, but where global and local shape the final outcome [...] and therefore the result is heterogeneity." See Victor Roudometof, *Glocalization: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 65.

[61] Wangpo Tethong, "The 2008 uprising and the Olympics," *Tibetan Review*, June 22, 2018, https://www.tibetanreview.net/the-2008-uprising-and-the-olympics/; "Human rights groups urge IOC to move the 2022 Winter Olympics out of China," *CBC News*, September 9, 2020, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/china-olympics-human-rights-groups-urge-ioc-to-move-2022-winter-games-tibet-hong-kong-uighurs/.

determining how it shall be organized, experienced and ruled, thus making Olympic participants distinct own Olympic subjects separate from one's national citizenship.[62] This is fundamentally at odds with the IOC idea of the "neutrality of sport."

Although the ideology of sport's neutrality is part of many international sports federations, in the Olympic movement, "neutrality" reaches the form of dogma, which is fed by ideological endogamy, a refusal to accept new perspectives, epistemological isolation, and institutional narcissism.[63] The IOC spell of understanding that "sport is neutral" and "not political" has been carried throughout interpretations of the Olympic movement for a very long time and has been reinforced by Olympic Movement researchers affiliated with Olympic Studies Centers and the International Olympic Academy.[64] Quite simply, the Olympic Games are "the most quintessentially political sporting event the world has ever known."[65] Boykoff characterizes them as a form of sportwashing, that is, "phenomenon whereby political leaders use sports to appear important or legitimate on the world stage while stoking nationalism and deflecting attention from chronic social problems and human-rights woes on the home front."[66]

The IOC, with its emphasis on the apolitical nature of the Olympic movement, has recently come under increased pressure to rethink what is perceived as political activism. In the wake of the protests following the death of George Floyd in the United States in 2020 and the subsequent Black Lives Matter movement, many international sport federations were calling for the IOC Rule 50 to be scrapped and for athletes to be able to openly express their views.[67] In 2020, however, the president of the IOC, Thomas Bach, claimed that violations of Rule 50, of which he highlighted kneeling, gestures such as those of Tommie Smith and John Carlos, patches, or symbols, or disrespecting an opponent on the podium,

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62 Carter, "The Olympics as Sovereign," 55.

63 Luis Javier Ruiz Cazorla, José Luis Chinchilla Minguet, and Iván López Fernández, "Rhetoric and Power: The Idealism and 'Philosophy of Life' of the Olympic Movement," *Quest* 63, no. 4 (2011): 352–365, doi: 10.1080/00336297.2011.10483686.

64 Ibid., 354.

65 Jonathan Grix and Mark James, "The politicisation of sport and the principle of political neutrality: a contradiction in terms?" *The International Sports Law Journal* 24 (July 2024): 68–77, here 71, doi: 10.1007/s40318-024-00273-w.

66 Jules Boykoff, "Toward a Theory of Sportswashing: Mega-Events, Soft Power, and Political Conflict," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 39, no. 4 (December 2022): 342–351, here 342, doi: 10.1123/ssj.2022-0095.

67 Cliff Brunt, "Athletes act: Stars rise up against racial injustice in 2020," *AP News*, December 30, 2020, https://apnews.com/article/breonna-taylor-election-2020-nfl-race-and-ethnicity-nba-192cec690b8e54d0c2464e17bd836437.

could lead to athletes being excluded from the Olympics. He justified these sanctions on the need to preserve the Olympics as a non-political event, and said athletes are free to express their views within their own social media profiles.[68]

However, social pressure has led to a "softening" of Rule 50 despite the IOC's conservative approach. The emphasis on social movements as agents of social change rather than politics became an important IOC argument for modifying its stance. IOC Agenda 2020+5 acknowledges the significance of social movements such as Black Lives Matter or #MeToo – where athletes have been central to promoting positive societal change in and through sport.[69] In 2021, before the actual Tokyo Olympics, the IOC updated Rule 50 to allow athletes to express their views before the start of competitions, provided these expressions are not disruptive and respect other competitors. Nevertheless, the Rule 50 continues to prohibit protests during medal ceremonies, on the podium, on the field of play, or during official Olympic events such as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies.[70]

This decision was based on research conducted by the IOC Athletes' Commission. The survey involved over 3,500 athletes, representing 185 different National Olympic Committees and all 41 Olympic sports, and with the highest proportion of responses from Chinese athletes.[71] Thus, the Indigenous numerical representation as Olympic athletes, like other numerically small groups, did not have a major opportunity to influence the shape of the edited version of Rule 50 through the IOC Athletes' Commission survey. Further, the IOC specified that athletes' opportunities to express their opinions were in official press conferences, through social and traditional media, and at mixed zones in competition venues.[72] Nevertheless, it remained in force that there are still sanctions for violating Rule 50 and the Olympic Charter, with each specific case to be decided

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[68] Graham Dunbar, "IOC president defends rules limiting Olympic protests," *AP News*, January 10, 2020, https://apnews.com/article/winter-olympics-olympic-games-sports-general-sports-2020-tokyo-olympics-b931c8a5ed379bcc59c922b2d8cb8e2f; "Rule 50 Guidelines," IOC, January 2020, https://www.olympic.org/-/media/document%20library/olympicorg/news/2020/01/rule-50-guidelines-tokyo-2020.pdf.

[69] IOC, "Olympic Agenda 2020+5: 15 Recommendations" (Lausanne: IOC, 2021), 32.

[70] "IOC Athletes' Commission's Recommendations on Rule 50 and Athlete Expression at the Olympic Games fully endorsed by the IOC Executive Board," *IOC News*, April 21, 2021, https://olympics.com/ioc/news/ioc-athletes-commission-s-recommendations-on-rule-50-and-athlete-expression-at-the-olympic-games.

[71] "Athlete Expression consultation. IOC Athletes' commission report" (April 2021), IOC https://olympics.com/athlete365/app/uploads/2021/04/IOC_AC_Consultation_Report-Athlete_Expression_21.04.2021.pdf, 15; "IOC Athletes' Commission's recommendations on Rule 50."

[72] "IOC Athletes' Commission's Recommendations on Rule 50".

by their respective National Olympic Committee, International Sport Federation, and the IOC.[73]

The need to show support for oppressed peoples did not stop the silver medalist American track and field athlete Raven Saunders from potentially getting into trouble, as she raised and crossed her arms on the podium in Tokyo. Subsequently, the IOC initiated an investigation to determine if the gesture violated the Rule 50. The U.S. Olympic Committee stood up for her, saying there was no violation of Olympic rules as it was a "peaceful expression in support of racial and social justice [that] was respectful of her competitors." Subsequently, the IOC suspended its investigation on Saunders' gesture.[74] In Tokyo, more athletes expressed their support for racial equality. For example, several women's soccer teams took the knee before their games.[75] While the Australian women's soccer team did not kneel, they chose to support the marginalized in another way. With two Indigenous athletes in their team, they unfurled the Aboriginal flag before their match and took a team photo to express their support and solidarity with Indigenous Australians.[76]

Although Rule 50 was softened in 2021, Afghan Refugee athlete Manizha Talash was disqualified at the 2024 Paris Games for displaying the words "free Afghan women" on her outfit during her Olympic break dance competition.[77] The IOC's investigations into Rule 50 violations at recent Olympics in the cases of Sanders and Talash are telling of the IOC's attitude towards potential expressions of opinion, even by potential Indigenous Olympians.

The changed IOC Rule 50 in its actual form is an unlawful infringement of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) because it is

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[73] "Rule 50 Guidelines," 10.

[74] "Raven Saunders' gesture on Olympic podium legal, U.S. committee says," *CBS News*, August 2, 2021, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/raven-saunders-gesture-olympic-podium-legal-us-committee-says/.

[75] The gesture of kneeling as a protest against racism came to prominence in 2016 when San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick began kneeling during the American national anthem. He wanted to highlight what he described as the ongoing oppression of black people in the United States. See Analis Bailey, "On this day four years ago, Colin Kaepernick began his peaceful protests during the national anthem," *USA Today*, August 26, 2020, https://eu.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/2020/08/26/colin-kaepernick-started-protesting-day-2016/3440690001/.

[76] AAP, "Claim Australian soccer players 'refused' to kneel is an own goal," *AAP*, July 23, 2021, accessed August 20, 2024, https://www.aap.com.au/factcheck/claim-australian-soccer-players-refused-to-kneel-is-an-own-goal/; Samantha Lewis, "Matildas strike balance in search for team identity in Olympics opener," *The Guardian*, July 22, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jul/22/matildas-strike-balance-in-search-for-team-identity-in-olympics-opener.

[77] "Refugee B-Girl disqualified for message at Olympics," *BBC*, August 9, 2024, https://www.bbc.com/sport/olympics/articles/cgm7v44wg0wo.

an interference with athletes' freedom of expression.[78] Instead, the IOC should revisit if there is any need for the Rule 50 at all. At the same time, the ambivalence of the IOC's contradictory approach to human rights is evident. One of the IOC requirements states that, "Any expression must also be compliant with the laws of the host nation."[79] However, Rule 50's banning on certain forms of expression creates ambiguity when the host nation's laws regarding freedom of expression may actually be either more restrictive or more lenient than Rule 50 itself. It is unclear which framework takes precedence. Essentially, the line between promoting activism and engaging in political acts is blurry, and the punishments imposed for breaching Rule 50 are disproportionate to its stated aim of preserving the political neutrality of sport.[80]

The Olympic movement has not reflected domestic and international law concerning Indigenous peoples for many decades. In particular, the right to free, prior, and informed consent for activities that impact Indigenous communities and their territories is absent. The right to free, prior, and informed consent is one of the key principles enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As O'Bonsawin argues, the IOC "has historically moved freely onto Indigenous territories, as experience in Canada [...], demonstrating minimal regard for the rights of Indigenous peoples, who too often, become unwillingly indentured to the movement."[81] She maintains that the IOC's power structure is highly elitist, comprising approximately 100 voting members, with the impacts of its decision-making affecting millions of Indigenous peoples.[82]

Imagination and Representation of Indigenous Peoples at the Olympics Spectacle

The Olympics are a spectacle,[83] but local interpretations of that spectacle may vary. What meanings do glocal audiences attach to the transmitted images of Indigenous peoples in the Olympics, and in what discourses? One of the

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[78] Mark James and Guy Osborn, "Athlete Activism at the Olympics: Challenging the Legality of Rule 50 as a Restriction on Freedom of Expression," in *Interdisciplinary Studies in Human Rights 10: Sports and Human Rights*, ed. Véronique Boillet, Sophie Weerts, and Andreas R. Ziegler (Cham: Springer, 2024), 189, 203, doi: 10.1007/978-3-031-56452-9_8.
[79] Ibid., 195.
[80] Ibid., 206.
[81] O'Bonsawin, "Olympism at Face," 122–123.
[82] Ibid., 132.
[83] Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle* (Paris: Buchet/Castel, 1967).

dominant and long-standing global discourses is the primitive/civilized dichotomy in defining modernity. This discourse accentuates the dialectical feature of characteristics – one excludes the other. Thus, the representation of cultural performances in opening and closing ceremonies can signify for many viewers the existing "primitiveness" of Indigenous peoples, while an athlete's specific sporting performance in "modern branded sportswear" may signify their successful integration and civilization, or the total loss or rejection of Indigenous identity – an effort that has been made by a number of states. Thus, by denying the right to multi-layered self-identification during all phases of Olympics, the "Indigenous" remains confined to these two categories. It is this dialectic that explains why many reporters in 2000 wondered how the former Taiwan Indigenous Olympic silver medalist athlete C. K. Yang could have become a *tâng-ki* cleric at the Temple of the Imperial Seal, who performs various self-inflicted injuries as part of his healing activities and in trance while exorcising evil spirits. The understanding of the athlete as an individual who strives to enhance performance and cultivate the body in a completely rational manner and using all available scientific knowledge, was at odds with the seemingly incomprehensible and self-degrading approach to the body and the irrationally structured time and application in the sphere of society that could conjure up notions of traditionalism, superstition and "backwardness." However, given the local situation in Taiwan at the time, *tâng-ki* was not an expression of a "relic from the past," but a manifestation of Taiwan's modernization, as Taiwanese nationalism could be expressed through it.[84]

Yet, Indigenous sovereignties at the Olympics must be seen in decolonizing processes that challenge stereotypical forms of knowledge. Despite considerable initial difficulties, there has been some ground gained already. Sámi athletes and Sámi sport, such as reindeer racing and lassoing, discussed with a bid to host the Olympics in Norway in 2018 and exhibited during the opening ceremony in 1994 Lillehammer Olympics, have recently been instrumental in changing mainstream understandings and representations of the Sámi people.[85] Other examples include the New Zealand national Olympic team, which has been open since 2004 to the Maori experience through the work

[84] Andrew D. Morris, "The Olympic decathlete who became a shaman: C. K. Yang and the masculine body in modern Taiwan," *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* 5, no. 1 (April 2019): 25–41, doi: 10.1386/eapc.5.1.25_1.

[85] Eivind Å. Skille, Michael P. Sam, and Steve J. Jackson, "The contested terrain of sport, media & indigenous representation: a case study of Sámi sport organisation in Norway," *European Journal for Sport and Society* 21 (July 2024): 1–18, doi: 10.1080/16138171.2024.2382951.

of cultural advisors such as Amster Reedy or Trevor Shailer,[86] as well as its interaction with one of the Indigenous hosts of the Vancouver Olympics in 2010, the Squamish Nation. The mutual recognition took the form of a special blanket ceremony.[87]

It would be very interesting to know more about these interactions, which are not usually mentioned in academic texts. Nevertheless, these interactions may highlight the need for dignified mutual recognition as well as respecting the passage of time in relation to various events. Yet, in the neoliberal set-up of the Olympic Games with a fixed order of embedded activities in a defined time and space in its program, the organizers of the precise activities can hardly be expected to give space to the ritualized greetings according to Indigenous diplomatic protocols in the fully sufficient time required. However, the initiation of any discussion that allows for an understanding of Indigenous protocols beyond the Olympic spectacle may be one of the initial steps in decolonization processes leading to the affirmation of Indigenous sovereignties.

Conclusion

Whatever the global or glocal discourses, and rigidity of the IOC, it is necessary to consider the very agency of individual Indigenous athletes, as well as of participants performing in cultural programs and in their role as organizers, who also become global actors thanks to the enormous media attention. Even with the input of Indigenous Olympians, incremental changes are occurring at the conservative IOC as we could see with Jim Thorpe's restoration.

Indigenous agency and its role in the decolonization process is not only driven by the athletes themselves, but also by the cultural advisors who work within the national teams. Their experience and knowledge help to promote Indigenous sovereignties. With the inclusion of Indigenous representatives into the organizational and power structures of the IOC, which has so far taken place only at national levels, modifications of those structures through Indigenous agency might become more possible. To date, however, the IOC's practice has tended to be superficial acknowledgments that fail to engage with Indigenous sovereignties

[86] Waatea Team, "Inspiring tohunga Amster Reedy dies," *Waatea*, September 18, 2014, https://waateanews.com/2014/09/18/inspiring-tohunga-amster-reedy-dies/; Dale Husband, "Trevor Shailer: Our Rio team – and our Māori dimension," *E-Tangata*, July 23, 2016, https://e-tangata.co.nz/korero/our-rio-team-and-our-maori-dimension/.

[87] Erueti, "Mātauranga Māori," 66–67.

and self-determination to which many scholars have pointed out in the relationship of various colonial institutions to Indigenous peoples in general.[88]

If the Olympic Movement is committed to Olympism, it is crucial that its main body, the IOC, truly gives equal space to all, including Indigenous peoples. In this respect, it is important that the IOC really takes into account the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The cases where the IOC can prove its commitment are the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics in relation to the Haudenosaunee and lacrosse, and the 2032 Brisbane Olympics, whose organizers have an ambitious plan for its legacy.[89] With the "Sport as an Enabler of Sustainable Development" resolution adopted by the United Nations in 2024 that "supports the overarching mission of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to be a unifying force, bringing the world together in peaceful competition with no discrimination whatsoever,"[90] we will see whether the IOC's stated desire for diversity and dignity will translate into a much more welcoming IOC approach to Indigenous peoples. Further, for many Indigenous peoples, the withdrawal of the IOC Rule 50 would allow them to declare a multi-layered identity that does not necessarily reflect a desire for separatist aspirations and the disruption of state entities.

It is evident that the IOC's major changes in its approach to its own rules do not come widely from within but gradually by being pushed by athletes and their media followers and activists who are putting pressure on the rigid IOC structures. Although the presence of Indigenous peoples influences the Olympic Movement and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, Indigenous peoples do not yet have the economic power to assert themselves in the neoliberal environment shaping and simultaneously being shaped by the IOC vis-à-vis the major Olympic sponsors on which the IOC depends for its operation.

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[88] Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*; Tuck and Young, "Decolonization is not a metaphor"; Quijano and Ennis, "Coloniality of Power."

[89] The 2032 Brisbane Olympics and Paralympics organizers declare a plan to establish an idyllic relationship between Indigenous and majority populations by 2042: "In 2042, success would mean that we are united, celebrating our shared history, and live in a country where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are recognized, their contribution valued, and communities have the same social and economic opportunities as all Australians." See "Elevate 2042: The Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games Legacy Strategy" (State of Queensland: Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport, 2023), 15.

[90] IOC, "Sport unites all 193 Member States at the UN General Assembly – 'Sport as an Enabler of Sustainable Development' resolution adopted by consensus," *IOC News*, November 12, 2024, https://www.olympics.com/ioc/news/sport-unites-all-193-member-states-at-the-un-general-assembly-sport-as-an-enabler-of-sustainable-development-resolution-adopted-by-consensus.

It would be easy to conclude that the current Olympic Games and Indigenous representation reflect the still dominant colonial and neoliberal thinking associated with the so-called Western culture, to which the birth of the modern Olympic movement is linked. Indigenous peoples can, of course, choose between the politics of recognition and the politics of refusal and completely ignore the Olympics as a Western colonial product from which they want to distance themselves and "really decolonize." From a certain perspective, however, it would probably be unstrategic not to use the media interest in this glocal sporting event to present and influence discourses concerning Indigenous peoples and their sovereignties. New media and social networks offer alternative exotic consumption of the Olympics via the simultaneous fulfilment of Debord's spectacle and Baudrillard's simulacra of ethnocentric multiculturalism. However, several questions remain unanswered. For example, how do members of different Indigenous groups themselves perceive the media images of those performing in the cultural parts of the program or of individual athletes? To what extent do the Olympic Games and their simulacra mediated by global transmission help to articulate the Indigenous sovereignties and how are they understood by various audiences? How do these media-transmitted images affect Indigenous peoples' sovereignties around the world at local and global levels? It remains an open question to which multidisciplinary research can offer various interpretations. And, as has been argued, Indigenous sovereignties need to be viewed comprehensively.

REVIEWS

Frank Bösch, **Deals mit Diktaturen. Eine andere Geschichte der Bundesrepublik.** München: C.H. Beck, 2024. 622 pages. ISBN 978-3-406-81339-9.

Can economic and diplomatic partnership with authoritarian regimes contribute to their liberalization or even bring about their eventual democratization? This question has been widely debated in recent decades in connection with the West's policies towards China, Iran, Russia, and others. Germany's most recent governments have perhaps been the most prominent adherents to this theory. The country's longstanding relations with Vladimir Putin – especially the Nord-Stream pipeline projects – have become the subject of much criticism since the 2014 annexation of Crimea and even more intensively since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Politicians, analysts, and academics alike have accused the governments of Chancellors Schröder, Merkel, and Scholz of appeasement-style policies in the face of an ever more openly revisionist and aggressive Russia. Defenders of bringing about "change through trade" (*Wandel durch Handel*) often point to Willy Brandt's *Neue Ostpolitik*, the constructive engagement with the Warsaw Pact that helped foster détente in the Cold War. While much of the current debate centers on engagement with rival authoritarian states, less attention has been paid to Germany's past relationships with dictatorial and authoritarian regimes it has considered allies or even friends. In his latest monograph, *Deals mit Diktaturen. Eine andere Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* [Deals with Dictatorships: A Different History of the Federal Republic of Germany], historian Frank Bösch (University of Potsdam) addresses this overlooked aspect of German foreign policy.

In his six-hundred-page volume, Bösch seeks to tell the story of the manifold relationships that Germany has cultivated with authoritarian regimes around the globe. While the focus is reserved for the decades of the Bonn Republic from 1949 to 1990, the book also includes a review of and reflections on the post-1989 era and recent developments. Some of the findings of this densely researched, detailed monograph may be sobering considering Germany's supposedly values-based foreign policy of recent years. Most of Bösch's work is dedicated to analysis of the FRG's relationships not with its Cold War foes, but with the many other undemocratic regimes that it has regarded as allies and partners – albeit sometimes difficult and uncomfortable ones. Bösch stresses at the very beginning that his aim is not to provide a history of the dictatorships in question, but rather – as his title suggests – a different perspective on the history of the Federal Republic itself. In contrast to some recent publications that portray authoritarian regimes as inherently at odds with liberal democracies and indeed alien to them,[1] Bösch highlights the close cooperations, interconnections, and even ideological sympathies between Bonn and various dictatorships, as well as the heterogeneous responses and reactions to them from the West German media and civil society. These responses have ranged from

[1] Anne Applebaum, *Autocracy, Inc: The Dictators Who Want to Run the World* (New York: Doubleday, 2024).

admiration of and fascination with certain regimes to broad solidarity with their victims and outrage at their imprisonment and torture.

Relying on a wide variety of sources ranging from media reports to ministerial archives, personal papers of high-ranking politicians, the archives of party foundations, and even documents from the foreign intelligence service BND, the book sets out on an ambitious task. It consists of thirteen densely researched chapters in which Bösch analyzes the FRG's view of and approach to the Iranian and Ethiopian monarchies in the 1950s and 1960s, the regimes of Franco and Salazar on the Iberian Peninsula, the Colonels' regime in Greece, various dictatorships in South Korea, Pinochet's Chile and other regimes in South America and Africa, and Gaddafi's Libya, as well as communist China under Deng Xiaopin. Regarding his terminology, the author admits that his synonymous use of the labels "dictatorship" and "autocracy" does not follow typologies common in political science. Instead, he uses the terms to refer to any system of unelected government that relies on violent suppression of its opposition (pp. 16–17). This approach allows Bösch to avoid unnecessary distraction by theoretical differences between "monarchies," "people's republics," and military juntas.

While Bösch clearly focuses on the pro-Western and anti-communist regimes of the Cold War, two chapters of his book are also dedicated to the FRG's changing relations with the Warsaw Pact. Here, the author is able to enrich the state of research on this already thoroughly examined topic. However, since the changes in Bonn's *Ostpolitik* have always been central in the historiography of the FRG, he might well have shortened some of his detailed descriptions that somewhat distract from the main and innovative contribution of his study, which is shedding light on the FRG's changing image and treatment of *allied* regimes.

Despite its richness of detail and its leaps from one Cold War theater to another, the book manages to retain a comprehensible and accessible style. Defining his approach, the author argues for a broad interpretation of the word *deal* as he seeks to address various forms of active cooperation, instead of narrowing them down to written contracts and formal diplomatic negotiations. This consequently leads him to assess that not only diplomats, entrepreneurs, and government representatives, but also human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, had to make deals with dictatorships as they attempted to help incarcerated dissidents or simply gather information on the situation in a specific country. Societal groups, from critical and uncritical journalists to trade unionists and the activists of the "New Left," all had to engage with the authoritarian systems to further their goals, rendering the practice of *dealing* with dictatorships morally ambiguous.

Bösch paints a picture of the FRG that is at odds with the official rhetoric of German foreign policy. He addresses an oft-levied charge: Germany's state and commercial representatives have cultivated and maintained close relations with various dictatorships and authoritarian regimes since the 1950s primarily for economic reasons, while violations of human rights in those countries were often of little concern. Unsurprisingly, anti-communism and business interests served to legitimize often deeply interwoven

economic, political, and military contacts, from government guarantees for investments to prolific arms sales.

Competition with East Germany for international attention drove Bonn to try to humor autocrats in the Global South. At the same time, more baroque heads of state such as the Shah of Iran or Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia gave Bonn an opportunity to perform its own sovereignty and respectability through pompous state visits. Such visits may not always have had tangible results but were of high symbolic importance to the new Germany, which was still being avoided by democratic heads of state in the post-war years (pp. 21–27). Bösch illustrates the wide-ranging measures German authorities would take in order to remain on favorable terms with tyrannical "friends." Some sections on the political culture of the Adenauer-era make the FRG's continuity with Germany's totalitarian past obvious to an unsettling degree. Government officials with Nazi pasts and authoritarian impulses went to great lengths to quell domestic protests against allied heads of state, monitor and intimidate critical media reports, and even prosecute cartoonists. Additionally, the FRG's intelligence services surveilled foreign students and dissidents and closely cooperated with their colleagues at, for example, Iran's SAVAK secret police.

Former Nazi diplomats were content to continue their careers in the German embassies in right-wing authoritarian ruled states, where they showed great sympathy as well as ideological and material support for their repressive host governments. In this context, Bösch demonstrates that the Nazi past was not a liability for the FRG's reputation everywhere, as it could count on sympathy among the elites of some authoritarian-ruled countries like Francoist Spain or Salazar's Portugal *because* of its past. Close cooperation in military affairs and the rhetoric of occidental Christian brotherhood between Bonn, Madrid, and Lisbon were, however, not without risk from a public-relations perspective. Memories of Germany's role in the Spanish Civil War were still present throughout Europe and North America. Despite the risk, Bösch identifies a tendency to sympathize with the catholic Iberian regimes especially among the ranks of the governing CDU/CSU – a certain ideological affinity that has recently been more closely analyzed by Fabio Wolkenstein's 2022 study on the intellectual history of Europe's Christian Democratic parties.[2]

Cultural relativism led the FRG's diplomats to view many countries as unfit for democracy and in need of an authoritarian transition period, while an opportunistic interpretation of Germany's own history supported the idea that because of its past, Germany was not entitled to criticize human rights abuses in other countries – a reverse application of the normative historical dimension often present in contemporary German political discourse.

Balancing out his meticulous chronicle of Bonn's "pragmatic" policies towards repressive torture states, Bösch also brings to light a rarely appreciated history of broad public solidarity with the victims of various dictatorships. This was expressed through

[2] Fabio Wolkenstein, *Die dunkle Seite der Christdemokratie: Geschichte einer autoritären Versuchung* (München: C.H. Beck, 2022).

demonstrations, petitions, and the activities of labor unions, Lutheran and Catholic congregations, the media, and emerging civil society organizations. Pioneering in the research of the history of Amnesty International, he devotes an entire chapter to Amnesty's German section, for the first time accessing its German archive.

The outrage of large sections of the public at the military coups in Greece (1967) and Chile (1973) and the crimes of the subsequent regimes, as well as the more conciliatory position of certain conservative politicians, are still relatively well-remembered in German public consciousness. However, Bösch also reconstructs the much less remembered yet widespread public support for dissidents abducted from German soil by the mostly "forgotten" South Korean military-dictatorship (pp. 207–215). In general, with regard to the changes in the public's attitude towards human rights, Bösch summarizes: "Not the extent of the murder and torture of opposition members determined the German commitment, but the political, economic, and cultural proximity of the torturing state to the Federal Republic" (pp. 495–496). In this sense, the presence of Greek *Gastarbeiter* workers and the perceived "Europeanness" of Chile helped to humanize the victims of those regimes' oppression and mobilize protests in Germany.

Bösch makes an almost opposite observation about Africa. Because of a lack of interest and insight into the conflicts of that continent, no broad protest campaigns were mounted against African regimes except for the issue of Apartheid. Bonn did not shy away from courting the likes of Idi Amin or Jean Bédel Bokassa and engaged in especially close political and economic relations with Zaire's kleptocratic ruler of three decades, Mobutu. The key position of Mobutu's "stable" anti-communist regime in the African state system and the enormous possibilities of the country's resources assured that he would be both a welcome guest and an economic as well as a military partner for Germany. Here, as in other cases, Bösch identifies a special role of the federal state of Bavaria and its governing party, the CSU, which engaged in a type of independent foreign policy. The CSU established uniquely close contacts to Mobutu, Pinochet and other strong men because of its strong ties to industrial circles as well as a certain ideological affinity with right-wing authoritarianism (pp. 324–335).

Two case studies of non-allied regimes serve as an interesting contrast to the clearly pro-western ones in places like Spain and Chile. West Germany's entanglement with Gaddafi's Libya is one example of an ambivalent relationship with a "difficult" regional actor whose unpredictable personality and willingness to extort concessions through his cooperation with terrorists forced concessions from Bonn. Secondly, the thaw in relations with Beijing reveals an odd reversal of previous patterns: while some of the most conservative politicians were the first to embrace "Red China" as an economic partner and largely ignored human rights issues, activists of the "New Left" largely left their admiration for Maoism behind and for the first time mobilized against a communist country because of its occupation of Tibet (pp. 434–443).

Bösch's study concludes with an overview of the post-1989 changes in Germany's perceptions of and interactions with autocracies. Here he points to the gradual establishment of hybrid regimes like that of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey that are seen in

a different light than the more "obvious" military regimes of the past. Another important development is the increased presence of migrants in Germany. While, for example, Chileans in 1970s West Germany were almost exclusively refugees and émigrés who had fled Pinochet, nowadays some segments of migrant communities are sympathetic to the regimes in their countries of origin, like those in Turkey or Russia. The desire to limit immigration, especially after 2015, became another catalyst for controversial deals with strongmen in the Merkel-era (pp. 470–478).

Deals with Dictatorships is understandably far from exhaustive – populous authoritarian-ruled states like Suharto's Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, and Thailand are hardly mentioned, despite their amicable relations with Bonn. Nevertheless, the monograph sets the standard for future research and can serve as an invitation for in-depth case studies and comparative approaches. The latter seem like an especially promising endeavor.

Leo Stauber
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Citations should always include a DOI (Digital Object Identifier), if the cited material has one.

Electronic sources should be cited including the date of last access, if appropriate.

6. Reference Examples

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