

“When Injustice becomes the Law, Resistance becomes a Duty!”

Hooligans, Political Extremists or a Social Movement: Case Study of Croatian
Football Fandom

By

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Abstract

The main research goal of the thesis is to explore if Croatian football fandom through its contention with Croatian Football Federation (HNS) developed and established itself as a social movement and an important social actor in Croatian society, thereby transcending the usual labels that the fandom has been attributed with, such as hooligans, political extremists or thugs. To properly address the research goal, the thesis implements a combination of research methods, primarily focusing on the qualitative method of semi-structured in-depth expert interviews, which the thesis complements with discourse analysis, historical analysis, and narrative analysis. With the help from the data acquired through seven expert interviews conducted during fieldwork in Croatia in April 2017, the thesis managed to confirm that Croatian football fandom does develop through its contention with Croatian Football Federation as a social movement. Also, the thesis managed to find out that the fandom as a social movement uses a variety conventional and unconventional means of contention to articulate its claims, such as protests, boycotts, specialized associations to more unconventional means such as instrumentalization of hooliganism and nationalism. Considering this, Croatian football fandom develops as a fluid, heterogeneous and flexible social movement.

Key words: *Croatian football fandom, social movements, repertoires of contention*

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List of Abbreviations

BBB – Bad Blue Boys

FARE – Football Against Racism in Europe

FIFA – Fédération Internationale de Football Association in French, International Federation of Football Associations in English

HAŠK – Croatian Academic Sports Club

HDZ – Croatian Democratic Union

HNL – Croatian Football League

HNS – Croatian Football Federation

HZSN – Croatian Sports Journalists Association

NH – Our Hajduk

SKH – League of Communists of Croatia

UEFA – Union of European Football Associations

VET – Value expectancy theory

ZZD – Together for Dinamo

I. Introduction

Football as a sport with a global appeal and mainstream popularity has drawn considerable interest from the academia, the general public and politics. Each of these spheres took interest in several aspects of the game, which signals the importance that the game developed in today's societies, but also a credit to its multilayered nature. Football, due to its omnipresence in the current age of globalization and due to its enduring appeal amongst people of diverse backgrounds, became known as the people's game. The global appeal of football is also reflected in Croatia, where football is arguably the most popular sport in the country. The popularity of the game in Croatia is particularly visible through establishment of numerous fan groups who support their preferred clubs. Most professional football clubs in Croatia have their own official fan groups, who operate as non-governmental, non-party and non-profit associations, under the 'Law on Associations.'¹ However, those fan groups would often be involved in various non-football related events giving them a certain reputation of infamy, a reputation that was developed with the formation of first fan groups in Yugoslavia and continued in newly sovereign Croatia.

The notoriety of Croatian football fandom seemingly gained new ground in recent years, as the fans were involved in a series of incidents that included examples of disorder, physical violence or display of radical nationalism. One of the most recent infamous incidents with the involvement of Croatian fans includes the incident during 2016 European Championships in France, when Croatian national football team played against Czech Republic in Saint Etienne. During the game, Croatian football fans tried to disband the game by throwing flares, missiles and pyrotechnics on to the field. However, what was peculiar about the incident, that otherwise looks like a hooligan incident, was that the Croatian fans were trying to disrupt the game when

¹ Croatian Parliament, "Zakon o udruženjima [Law on Associations]" (Croatian Parliament, 2014), <https://www.zakon.hr/z/64/Zakon-o-udrugama>.

Croatia was leading comfortably. At the same time, Croatian fans started to fight among themselves, leaving the police, authorities, media and other spectators completely bewildered about the behavior of the fans. In the aftermath of the incident, Croatian authorities explained the incident as an act of hooliganism and an expression of extremism by Croatian fans, labeling the fans as hooligans, criminals or terrorists.

Saint Etienne incident, which was preceded by other incidents with the involvement of Croatian fans, incited a debate about the state of Croatian football, where authorities blamed the fandom for the problems in domestic football. Leading Croatian institution in charge of football, Croatian Football Federation (HNS),² accused Croatian football fandom for “holding hostage” with their hooligan activities Croatian football, Croatian clubs and the national team.³ The thesis aims to enter this debate, but from a scholarly point of view, something that is lacking in Croatian academia, especially when it is related to a topic that includes multiple issues from nationalism, political radicalism or corruption. The thesis aims to set up a more in-depth look on Croatian football fandom, not settling on the narrow definition of them as either hooligans, extremists or thugs, but exploring the bigger picture of the issue, which is related to the ongoing struggle between Croatian football fandom and HNS.

Croatian fans perceive HNS as the main responsible for the dire state of Croatian football, which is not only characterized by hooliganism or expressions of nationalism, but also by match-fixing, poor infrastructure and corruption. Also, Croatian football fandom opposes a far-reaching clientilistic network developed by HNS which extends to Croatian political elites gathered around the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ),⁴ thereby the struggle of the fandom

² From here on Croatian Football Federation will be referred by its acronym HNS

³ Hrvoje Delač, “Oglasio Se I HNS, Evo Što Kaže O Hulganskom Ispadu Na Poljudu! [HNS Responded, This Is What They Said about the Hooligan Incident on Poljud!],” *Večernji List*, March 13, 2017, <https://www.vecernji.hr/sport/oglasio-se-i-hns-evo-sto-kaze-u-hulganskom-ispadu-na-poljudu-1155780>.

⁴ From here on Croatian Democratic Union will be referred by its acronym HDZ.

receives an anti-establishment element. The thesis will analyze this contention between Croatian football fandom and HNS, and what kind of repertoires of contention do Croatian fans use to oppose a much stronger opponent.

Considering this, the thesis develops its central research question: Does the Croatian football fandom with its contention and opposition to HNS establish and develop as a social movement, thereby transcending labels such as hooligans or political extremists? The central research question is followed up by a second question: What are the means of collective action that make the Croatian football fandom a social movement and an actor in the political framework of Croatia? The thesis develops accordingly several research hypotheses. The present Croatian football fandom with its contention against HNS does indeed develop as a social movement, where the fandom uses both conventional and unconventional means of contention within its movement. Those means include protests, citizen initiatives, boycotts, to more unusual means such as hooliganism, violence or instrumentalization of nationalist symbols, making it an interesting case to explore how nationalism and disorder are being instrumentalized for a variety of reasons. The development of Croatian football fandom into a social movement was not a spontaneous process, but a development rooted in history, as Croatian fan groups had a long history of social and political activism.

The thesis is divided into five chapters with a separate chapter dedicated for the theoretical framework and methodology. Subsequent chapter will focus on the general background of the football fan culture, with introducing key terms related to the culture, such as hooliganism, the fan ritual and the rivalries. After that, the thesis will move on to its case study of Croatian football fandom. The thesis aims to explore Croatian football fandom by focusing on two biggest Croatian fan groups, that of Torcida, official fan group of Hajduk, and that of the Bad Blue Boys, official fan group of Dinamo. Both groups have a history activism and are considered as suitable cases for the research. One chapter will focus on the origins of

Croatian football fandom, their involvement with politics, nationalism and the political elites. The chapter will serve as an introduction to the fandom and how their present activities are rooted in their past involvements. After this, the thesis will focus on its main research issue, that of the present Croatian football fandom and their contention with HNS. Considering the limitations of the thesis, the chapter will cover the period from the beginning of the decade up to the present day (2010-2017), and will focus on the most prominent activities involving Croatian football fandom, specifically focusing on the incidents in Milano and Split to develop an understanding of fan behavior and their unconventional methods of contention.

The aim of the thesis is through those chapters to explore its main research hypothesis and to confirm that Croatian football fandom developed as a social movement through its contention with HNS. However, the fandom by developing as a movement used a variety of repertoires to articulate its claims, which led to the fandom implementing various conventional and unconventional means from petitions, public protests or boycotts, to some more unlikely methods such as instrumentalization of nationalism. The thesis will focus on those repertoires as a necessary feature of the movement, and how the fandom develops as an important social actor within Croatian society.

1.1. Literature review and identifying the scholarly gap

When it comes to scientific research on football, the game has a long history of being explored by various scholars, who researched different aspects of football, from football violence, hooliganism, fan culture, football identity, to the involvement of politics and nationalism in football. One of the first efforts to extensively analyze football from an academic point of view was conducted by Tony Mason (1980)⁵ and Desmond Morris (1981).⁶ Mason

⁵ Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915*, Sports & Recreation (London: The Harvester Press Limited, 1980).

⁶ Desmond Morris, *The Soccer Tribe* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1981).

conducts a historical analysis of the game, exploring how it affected English society through a specific timeframe (1863-1915), how football developed and how it influenced the emergence of fan culture. On the other hand, Morris through a combination of sociological, ethnographic and anthropological approaches explores the tribal roots and rituals associated with football, while at the same time researching how in football a hierarchy is established among various participants. Other noteworthy research on the topic of football and identity, football and fan culture, as well as football in the age of globalization was conducted by Giulianotti (1999),⁷ Sandvoss (2003)⁸ and Markovits & Rensmann (2010),⁹ whose efforts significantly expanded the understanding of football as a social phenomenon.

A notable research topic that occupied the interest of scholars when it comes to academic research on football, is the topic of hooliganism. One of the pioneers in the research on hooliganism, crowd disorder and violence is Peter Marsh, who together with Elizabeth Rosser and Rom Harre, researches the issues in the book *The Rules of Disorder*.¹⁰ Marsh et al., explore how hooliganism occurs in practice and how it is connected to the concepts of territory and social space. Another important author dealing with the issue of hooliganism is Eric Dunning (1991)¹¹ & (1994),¹² who conducts an extensive research in understanding the phenomena of

⁷ Richard Giulianotti, "Hooligans and Carnival Fans: Scottish Football Supporter Cultures," in *Football Cultures and Identities*, ed. Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 29–40.

⁸ Cornel Sandvoss, *A Game of Two Halves: Football, Television, and Globalisation* (London: Routledge, 2003), <http://www.dawsonera.com/depp/reader/protected/external/AbstractView/S9780203561393>.

⁹ Andrei S. Markovits and Lars Rensmann, *Gaming the World: How Sports Are Reshaping Global Politics and Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010).

¹⁰ Peter Marsh, Elizabeth Rosser, and Rom Harre, *The Rules of Disorder*, Social World of Childhood (London: Routledge, 1978).

¹¹ Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy, and Ivan Waddington, "Anthropological Versus Sociological Approaches to the Study of Soccer Hooliganism: Some Critical Notes," *Sociological Review* 39, no. 3 (1991): 459–78.

¹² Eric Dunning, "The Social Roots of Football Hooliganism: A Reply to the Critics of the 'Leicester School,'" in *Football, Violence and Social Identity*, ed. Richard Giulianotti, Norman Bonney, and Mike Hepworth (London: Routledge, 1994), 123–52.

hooliganism through a sociological and anthropological perspective. Other authors of particular note dealing with hooliganism are Ramon Spaaij (2006)¹³ and Anastassia Tsoukala (2009).¹⁴ Spaaij through a comparative analysis of six Western European football club develops a detailed micro-orientated research on the phenomena of hooliganism, striving to give the phenomenon a proper definition by devoting considerable time to approach the subject from a theoretical perspective. Tsoukala deals with various issues directly related to football, from violence, hooliganism to security issues, where Tsoukala takes on a combination of approaches from sociology, anthropology or history to develop an analysis of hooliganism. Other notable scholars who contributed to this particular research field include Evans and Rowe (2002),¹⁵ Randal Collins (2008)¹⁶ and Hopkins & Treadwell (2014).¹⁷

Scholarly research that deals with Croatian football, its fandom or hooliganism is rather lacking with only a handful of scholars dealing with those issues in an extensive capacity. The most well-known scholars dealing with Croatian football from an academic perspective are Srđan Vrcan, Dražen Lalić and Benjamin Perasović, who should be considered as pioneers in scholarly research on football in Croatia. Vrcan (1990)¹⁸ & (2003)¹⁹ made one of the first scholarly researches in former Yugoslavia on how sports and violence relate to one another, but also how they influence identities of different groups. Vrcan also focuses on football,

¹³ Ramón Spaaij, *Understanding football hooliganism: a comparison of six Western European football clubs* (Amsterdam: Vossiuspers UvA, 2006).

¹⁴ Anastassia Tsoukala, *Football Hooliganism in Europe: Security and Civil Liberties in the Balance* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

¹⁵ Roger Evans and Mike Rowe, "For Club and Country: Taking Football Disorder Abroad," *Soccer & Society* 3, no. 1 (March 2002): 37–53.

¹⁶ Randall Collins, *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ Matt Hopkins and James Treadwell, eds., *Football Hooliganism, Fan Behaviour and Crime* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), <http://link.springer.com/10.1057/9781137347978>.

¹⁸ Srđan Vrcan, *Sport I Nasilje Danas U Nas I Druge Studije Sociologije Sporta [Sports and Violence Today in Our Country and Other Studies of Sociology of Sports]* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1990).

¹⁹ Srđan Vrcan, *Nogomet - politika - nasilje: Ogledi iz Sociologije Nogometa [Football - Politics - Violence: Views from Sociology of Football]* (Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk, 2003).

specifically on hooliganism and politicization of football, which he examines through the case study of Croatia. On the other hand, Lalić deals with various issues in Croatian football, but with an emphasis on Croatian football fandom. Lalić is best known for his provoking ethnographic research on the fans of Hajduk, which was published in the book *Torcida: pogled iznutra* [*Torcida: View from Inside*].²⁰ In his seminal work, Lalić uses ethnographical research, historical analysis, qualitative interviewing and participant observation to form an understanding of the football fan group Torcida. When it comes to more recent research on the issues of Croatian football, Perasović (1995),²¹ together with his frequent collaborator Marko Mustapić (2013),²² (2014)²³ & (2017),²⁴ figure as leading scholars in the field. Perasović and Mustapić tackle diverse issues from fan culture, fan identity, politicization of football, as well as the social activism of Croatian football fandom.

Other scholars engaged in scholarly research on Croatian football include notably Dario Brentin (2013),²⁵ (2014)²⁶ & (2016),²⁷ who focuses on the role football had in developing Croatian national identity, the position of football in post-socialist Croatia, and how nationalism

²⁰ Dražen Lalić, *Torcida: pogled iznutra* [*Torcida: View from Inside*] (Zagreb: Profil multimedija, 2011).

²¹ Benjamin Perasović, “Navijačko Pleme - Do Nacije I Natrag [Fan Tribe - To Nation and Back],” *Erasmus - Journal for Culture of Democracy*, no. 11 (1995): 61–67.

²² Benjamin Perasović and Marko Mustapić, “Nogometni Navijači U Kontekstu Sociologije U Hrvatskoj: Istraživačke Perspektive 20 Godina Poslije [Football Supporters in the Context of Croatian Sociology: Research Perspectives 20 Years After],” *Kineziologija* 45, no. 2 (2013): 262–275.

²³ Benjamin Perasović and Marko Mustapić, “Football, Politics and Cultural Memory: The Case of HNK Hajduk Split,” *Культура/Culture* 4, no. 6 (2014): 51–62.

²⁴ Benjamin Perasović and Marko Mustapić, “Carnival Supporters, Hooligans, and the ‘Against Modern Football’ Movement: Life within the Ultras Subculture in the Croatian Context,” *Sport in Society* 20, no. 7 (April 12, 2017): 1–17.

²⁵ Dario Brentin, “‘A Lofty Battle for the Nation’: The Social Roles of Sport in Tudjman’s Croatia,” *Sport in Society* 16, no. 8 (October 2013): 993–1008.

²⁶ Dario Brentin, “‘Now You See Who Is a Friend and Who an Enemy.’ Sport as an Ethnopolitical Identity Tool in Postsocialist Croatia,” *Südosteuropa. Zeitschrift Für Politik Und Gesellschaft*, no. 2 (2014): 187–207.

²⁷ Dario Brentin, “Ready for the Homeland? Ritual, Remembrance, and Political Extremism in Croatian Football,” *Nationalities Papers*, March 16, 2016, 860–76.

is deeply embedded in Croatian football. Other authors such as Hodges and Stubbs (2016)²⁸ look into how politics influences the activities of Croatian football fans, but they also look into the attitude of football fans towards various social, political and sports issues. On the other hand, Sindbæk (2013)²⁹ and Raschke (2015)³⁰ develop a more micro-orientated approach by focusing on specific issues, where Sindbæk focuses on how Dinamo was instrumentalized and manipulated by the political elites in the early 1990s for the purposes to create a specific vision of Croatianess, whereas Raschke explores the fan culture during the Yugoslav period, specifically focusing on Torcida and the Bad Blue Boys.

Despite a variety of issues researched by scholars, there has been a notable absence of research specifically focused on Croatian football fandom, particularly regarding their social and political activism. Scholars tend to favor research orientated more on hooliganism or violence of the fandom, specifically during Yugoslavia and the early years of Croatian independence. This is an important gap, as scholars who deal with the interrelation of sports, politics and nationalism have yet to explore the possibility of football fans acting as a social movement and a claim-maker against various state institutions. The usual concentration in the research on football relates also to the role of masculinity, subculture or the fans penchant for violence and far-right nationalism, without considering how a fandom can also operate as a social movement. Generally, the contention between Croatian football fandom and HNS has yet to be properly explored by scholars, nor did scholars consider exploring, if the activities of

²⁸ Andrew Hodges and Paul Stubbs, “The Paradoxes of Politicisation: Fan Initiatives in Zagreb, Croatia,” in *New Ethnographies of Football in Europe: People, Passions, Politics*, ed. Alexandra Schwell et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 55–74.

²⁹ Tea Sindbæk, “‘A Croatian Champion with a Croatian Name’: National Identity and Uses of History in Croatian Football Culture – the Case of Dinamo Zagreb,” *Sport in Society* 16, no. 8 (October 2013): 1009–24.

³⁰ Holger Raschke, “Jugoslawien in Der Kurve: Repräsentationen Des Sozialistischen Jugoslawiens Als Politischer Bestandteil Der Fußballfankultur Im (Post-) Jugoslawischen Raum [Yugoslavia in the Stand: Representations of Socialist Yugoslavia as a Political Element of Football Fan Culture in the Post-Yugoslav Area],” *Südosteuropäische Hefte* 4, no. 1 (2015): 66–86.

the fandom can be considered as a social movement. The thesis will use this academic gap and draw its originality from the hypothesis that Croatian football fandom with its contention with HNS develops as a social movement, where instrumentalization of nationalist symbols and hooliganism are part of their repertoires of contention.

II. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

2.1. Theoretical framework

The thesis uses a variety of scholarly works in forming its theoretical framework, but mostly focuses on works from sociology and nationalism studies. The main inspiration for the thesis was provided by the influential works of Charles Tilly on social movements, as well as on repertoires of contention. Tilly's works form the basis of the theoretical framework that will be implemented on the case study of Croatian football fandom. Tilly with the help of Tarrow defines social movement as a "sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities."³¹ The authors stress that social movements include public performances such as marches, rallies, demonstrations, creation of specialized associations, public meetings and statements, petitions or lobbying, along with public displays of worthiness, unity, commitment by wearing colors, displaying signs, chanting slogans, where organizations, networks, traditions and solidarities sustain these activities.³² However, what is important to note is that every social movement is built upon repertoires of contention, a concept developed by Tilly in 1993, which he defines as "established ways in which pairs of actors make and receive claims bearing on each other's interests."³³ Tilly expanded his initial concept of repertoires of contention by adding that it also includes an "array of contentious performances that are currently known and available within some set of political actors."³⁴

³¹ Charles Tilly and Sidney G. Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 2. ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11.

³² Ibid.

³³ Charles Tilly, "Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758–1834," *Social Science History* 17, no. 2 (1993): 265.

³⁴ Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 236.

The thesis complements and enhances the concept of social movements developed by Tilly and Tarrow, by adding several other influential concepts of social movements from the works of Karl-Dieter Opp, Jenkins and Form, and McCarthy and Zald. Opp defines a social movement as a collectivity of actors who want to achieve their goals by influencing the decision of a target, where a social movement has some degree of formal organization and size.³⁵ On the other hand, Jenkins and Form define social movements as organized efforts to bring about social change,³⁶ whereas McCarthy and Zald see social movements as a “set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society.”³⁷ Tilly and Tarrow’s definition of social movement is the core theory for the thesis, but the thesis adds additional definitions to enhance its main research hypothesis.

Also, the thesis plans to use another important theory within the field of social movements, which should provide an explanation for some of the unconventional means of contention used by the fandom in their contention with HNS. The theory in question is value expectancy theory (VET), which is a version of theory of rational action. Opp points out that the theory assumes that individuals perceive certain behavioral alternatives (he gives an example of demonstrations or working for a protest group), where the decision to choose one of these alternatives depends on the perceived behavioral consequences.³⁸ Opp continues for the theory by addressing the following:

³⁵ Karl-Dieter Opp, *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, Critique, and Synthesis* (London: Routledge, 2009), 40–41, <http://it.ceu.hu/vpn>.

³⁶ Craig J. Jenkins and William Form, “Social Movements and Social Change,” in *The Handbooks of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization*, ed. Thomas Janoski et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 331.

³⁷ John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,” *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1217–18.

³⁸ Opp, *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements : A Multidisciplinary Introduction, Critique, and Synthesis*, 6.

“For each behavioral consequence, its utility (or valuation) and its subjective expected probability that the consequence occurs are multiplied... A high value of the product of the utility and probability of a given consequence means that the consequence is valued by the individual very positively and expected with high certainty. The greater the number and values of such products for given behavioral alternative are, the higher is, by definition, the net utility of a given behavioral alternative. The theory states that the behavioral alternative with the highest net utility is performed.”³⁹

Value expectancy theory will be used to understand the behavior of Croatian football fandom and why Croatian fans use some unconventional means in their repertoires of contention, with a special emphasis on the instrumentalization of nationalist symbols.

However, the thesis will also use works of scholars of nationalism, as nationalism remains one of predominate features of Croatian football fandom, both in present and in their past activities. Michael Billig (1995)⁴⁰ with his seminal work on banal and hot nationalism will provide an important addition to the theoretical framework, along with his concept of flagging. Another important scholar of nationalism that will be referred in the thesis is Rogers Brubaker (1998)⁴¹ and his work on elite manipulation, as the thesis aims to analyze elite manipulation of Croatian football fandom in their early period of activities in Yugoslavia. The theoretical framework would not be complete without the inclusion of Eric Hobsbawm (1992),⁴² one of the few nationalism scholars who explored nationalism through football, regarding the game as a part of new mass traditions developed in 19th century that significantly influenced the identity

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

⁴¹ Rogers Brubaker, “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism,” in *National Self-Determination and Secession*, ed. Margaret Moore, 1st Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2–47, <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/0198293844.001.0001/acprof-9780198293842-chapter-11?>

⁴² Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, Canto Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

of the urban working-class. Hobsbawm develops in the process an interesting concept of invented traditions, which the thesis will consult.

2.2. Methodology

The thesis uses a combination of research methods, but mostly focusing on qualitative method of interviewing, discourse analysis and historical analysis, with a view to include statistical data and examples of oral history. Discourse and historical analysis will focus on publications, scholarly articles, newspapers and web portals. They should be useful in the theoretical chapter that deals with football fan culture, as well as for the chapter dealing with origins of Croatian football fandom. Since the origins of Croatian football fandom extend to the 1980s and 1990s, various primary and secondary sources are available, and discourse analysis along with historical analysis will be implemented to situated the topic within the research narrative of the thesis.

Another important method implemented in the thesis is the qualitative method of interviewing. The thesis uses semi-structured in-depth interviews, where the type of interview used for the thesis is the expert interview type. Flick describes expert interview as a special type of semi-structured interview which is “defined by the specific target group – people in certain professional positions, which enables them to inform about professional processes.”⁴³ In expert interviews the chosen interviewees are of less interests as a single person, but more of interest for their capabilities as experts for a certain field.⁴⁴ One of the advantages of expert interviews is that it is a more efficient and concentrated method of acquiring data compared to participatory observation or systematic surveys.⁴⁵ Bogner et al., point out that expert interviews can be

⁴³ Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, Fourth Edition (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 469.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 165.

⁴⁵ Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig, and Wolfgang Menz, eds., *Interviewing Experts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 2, <http://link.springer.com/10.1057/9780230244276>.

suitable to “shorten time-consuming data gathering process, particularly if the experts are seen as ‘crystallization points’ for practical insider knowledge and are interviewed as surrogates for a wider circle of players.”⁴⁶ Also, expert interview can be useful in situations in which it might be difficult or impossible to acquire access to a particular social field or individuals,⁴⁷ and as such offer a viable alternative to gain similar data from more available sources.

Despite its advantages, expert interviews have certain shortcomings. One of the main shortcomings is related to the problem that it is often difficult to identify the right experts,⁴⁸ and who can be attributed with the status of an expert often depends on the researcher’s judgement,⁴⁹ along with problems of confidentiality as delicate issues explored through those interviews may lead to answers being refused by the experts.⁵⁰ In order to successfully solve those issues, the thesis uses the definition of experts provided by Flick where experts are seen as persons who are particularly competent as authorities on certain matter of facts,⁵¹ a definition which the thesis expands by complementing it with Meuser and Nagel’s definition of who is an expert. Meuser and Nagel define experts as people who actively are involved in shaping public affairs, who can acquire their expertise outside their professional role, but have through their voluntary or professional engagement acquired specialized problem-solving and analytical knowledge that is of relevance in expert interviews.⁵²

To solve the issues related to expert interviews, the thesis uses two types of sampling for the interviews, purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is a “non-

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 168.

⁴⁹ Michael Meuser and Ulrike Nagel, “The Expert Interview and Changes in Knowledge Production,” in *Interviewing Experts*, ed. Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig, and Wolfgang Menz (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 18.

⁵⁰ Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 168.

⁵¹ Ibid., 165.

⁵² Bogner, Littig, and Menz, *Interviewing Experts*, 7.

random way of ensuring that particular categories of cases within a sampling universe are represented in the final sample of a project. The rationale for employing purposive strategy is that the researcher assumes, based on their *a-priori* theoretical understanding of the topic being studied that certain categories of individuals may have a unique, different or important perspective on the phenomenon in question.”⁵³ Snowball sampling was employed as this type of sampling “involves asking participants for recommendations of acquaintances who might qualify for participation, leading to ‘referral chains,’”⁵⁴ where snowball sampling provides an opportunity through recommendations of established participants to add new participants and as such to diversify the representative sample.

The decision to conduct expert interviews for the thesis was twofold. Firstly, due to time limitations of the fieldwork, as well as limitations of the thesis, expert interviews provided a viable method to acquire useful and quality data for research, especially as there was a notable lack of literature available on the explored topic. Secondly, I opted for expert interviews, as I was looking, due to the nature of the topic, for the most accurate, up-to-date and unbiased data from the participants, with an aim to avoid overtly subjective and impartial interviewees. Expert interviews as a research design provided an opportunity to achieve such aims in the research. Also, this type of interviewing offered me the chance to have a discussion with individuals who are well-versed in the issues researched in the thesis, thus providing valuable information and data and becoming a great alternative source, as other potential interview subjects such as high-ranked officials in HNS or radical football fans were unavailable for interviews. The data received from the interviewees will be analyzed through discourse analysis and narrative analysis.

⁵³ Oliver C. Robinson, “Sampling in Interview-Based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2014): 32.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

For the thesis, seven expert interviews were conducted in April 2017 during the fieldwork in Croatia, in the cities of Split, Zagreb and Varaždin. I picked the cities of Split and Zagreb as those are the cities of two biggest fan groups in Croatia, and the experts either live or are active in those cities. Varaždin was picked due to some experts conducting their own research in this city and were available for interviews in that city. Six of the interviews were conducted in Croatian, whereas one interview with Dario Brentin was conducted in English, thus the data and interviews present in the thesis are my direct translation and should be considered as such. The participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling, where initial contacts were made via e-mail or personal connections, whereas additional participants were selected based on recommendation either by personal contacts or from the participants themselves. From the seven experts that were interviewed, three of them are scholars working in academia with the background in sociology and political science, three of the interviewees are journalists involved in daily events in Croatian football with a long history of writing about Croatian football, and one interviewee is the first secretary and founder of citizen initiative Our Hajduk, which developed through the fan group Torcida, thus offering valuable insight and data about Croatian football fandom.

Three scholars interviewed for the thesis were Benjamin Perasović, Marko Mustapić and Dario Brentin. Perasović and Mustapić are sociologists working for the Institute of Social Science Ivo Pilar in Zagreb, and are known for their research on the matters of Croatian football and its fandom, whereas Brentin, a University Assistant at the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz, deals with issues of sport and identity in Croatia, particularly focusing on football in post-socialist Croatia. Three journalists that were chosen as interviewees are Aleksandar Holiga, Bernard Jurišić and Damir Petranović. Holiga is well-known for his writings about corruption and illegalities in Croatian football, and published about those issues internationally, in newspapers such as The Guardian, BBC or FourFourTwo. Jurišić was chosen

due to his long history of writing about Croatian football, and for his work Jurišić was awarded in 2012 for best column by Croatian Sports Journalists Association (HZSN).⁵⁵ Another journalist, Petranović was chosen due to his extensive writing about Croatian football and society and due to his firm knowledge about football fans in Split, where he regularly attends football matches, thereby having a good insider knowledge. The last participant was Bojan Islamović, the first secretary of the initiative Our Hajduk, where his knowledge in the creation of the initiative, their daily activities, as well as their struggle against HNS was crucial for understanding the wider phenomena explored in the thesis.

⁵⁵ Sportnet.hr, “Bernard Jurišić Primio Nagradu HZSN-a [Bernard Jurišić Received an Award from HZSN],” *Sportnet*, February 27, 2012, <http://sportnet.rtl.hr/vijesti/435380/ostali-sportovi-ostalo/bernard-jurismic-primio-nagradu-hzsn-a/>.

III. Understanding Football Fan Culture

The main aim of this chapter is to introduce some of the most important terms, definitions and elements of football fan culture, which are in turn necessary for further research, particularly in the case study of Croatian football fandom. The chapter will first start with a brief overview with the development of first organized supporters in football, before focusing on the features of football fandom such as iconography, the fan ritual and the rivalries. After that, the chapter will concentrate on the phenomena of hooliganism as the radical expression of football fandom, before concluding the chapter with the brief analysis of interrelation between football and politics, as one of the key aspects of the game.

3.1. The fans – historical background, the fan ritual and rivalries

Football fans have always been an important part of football, to the point that Morris rather intensely argues that “without the atmosphere they create, their fierce loyalties and their intense longings, the whole sport would collapse, not merely for financial reasons, but because it would lose its spirit.”⁵⁶ The emergence of fans as an organized football support is according to Hobsbawm hard to trace, along with their supporters’ culture and its practices.⁵⁷ Mason observes that already in 19th century England, people were attending football matches, where often the accommodation of the football grounds would lag behind the demand, but that did not stop the attendance to reach new levels by 1890s, which was an indicator of the game’s appeal.⁵⁸ However, what both Mason and Hobsbawm identify by observing the origins of football fans is their social background, arguing that the first supporters were notably tied to the working-

⁵⁶ Morris, *The Soccer Tribe*, 234.

⁵⁷ Eric J. Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 289.

⁵⁸ Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915*, Sports & Recreation (London: The Harvester Press Limited, 1980), 140–41.

class. Mason points out that “in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the years up to the outbreak of the war in 1914, playing and watching association football became a widespread activity among working people, particularly men and boys.”⁵⁹ Hobsbawm continues this narrative, by adding that “the urban and the working-class character of the football crowds is patent.”⁶⁰ This was confirmed by Armstrong and Giulianotti who noted that football essentially positioned itself as the dominant sport among the urban working-class.⁶¹ Despite football fans predominately originating from a working-class environment, the game itself, along with the clubs in the early days had been administered and controlled mostly by the middle and upper-middle classes,⁶² which can be explained due to the financial expenses needed to operate football clubs, organize matches or pay the players with professional contracts. Football as a game had early on a cross-class appeal, attracting different groups of people.

The influence of the working-class fans in the early stages of organized support in football was crucial as they from the late 1870s “succeeded in stamping their identity, values and culture on the game through forms of active spectatorship featuring noise, spectacle and partisanship.”⁶³ All those forms of active spectatorship would continue to feature in the future, and would eventually become a permanent feature of fan culture, essentially forming the fan ritual. Fan ritual is a specific type of ritual that entails “a developed routine of behavior, with certain stability and consistency, and with a system of signs through which specific messages are being transmitted along with a set of sanctions which are used for establishing the collective

⁵⁹ Ibid., 222.

⁶⁰ Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” 289.

⁶¹ Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti, “Football in the Making,” in *Football Cultures and Identities*, ed. Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1999), 3, <http://link.springer.com/10.1057/9780230378896>.

⁶² David Russell, “Associating with Football: Social Identity in England 1863-1998,” in *Football Cultures and Identities*, ed. Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 16.

⁶³ Ibid.

identity and relationship within a group,”⁶⁴ in the case of football, the group in question are the fans. The fan ritual as a core feature of football culture developed “three levels of expressive performance: level of visual expression, level of verbal expression and level of physical violence as the peak of that ritual.”⁶⁵ Visual expression, or as Lalić terms it the fan iconography is a vital part of active form of spectatorship for football fans, and it includes the usage of various tools for cheering, such as banners, flags, scarfs, where those items are marked with symbols, signs and colors, characteristic for a specific club and a specific fan group.⁶⁶ Verbal expression includes chanting, singing, shouting slogans, but it can have a positive and negative expression, where positive expression is directed towards expressing support for a team or players, whereas negative is characterized by threats and insults.⁶⁷ The last expression of fan ritual that regards physical violence is related to direct and violent confrontations between football fans, or football fans and the police.

Already from the early days of organized football support, football fans would develop a certain affiliation to a team, which they would reaffirm through active spectatorship. This belonging to a certain club would often be challenged during football matches by the opposing team or their fans, which led to the development of rivalries, an essential part of football fan culture. Sport in general “establishes certain lifestyles, values, a simultaneous spirit of rivalry and cooperation,”⁶⁸ where the fans often act as agents or representatives of those elements. Armstrong and Giulianotti point out that the history of football is full of rivalry and opposition as the game became a place for expression of deeper social and cultural antagonisms.⁶⁹ Those

⁶⁴ Lalić, *Torcida: pogled iznutra [Torcida: View from Inside]*, 127.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁶⁸ Michał Buchowski et al., “Introduction: People, Passions and Much More: The Anthropology of Football,” in *New Ethnographies on Football in Europe: People, Passions, Politics*, ed. Alexandra Schwell et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 6.

⁶⁹ Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti, *Fear and Loathing in World Football*, Global Sports Cultures (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 1–2.

antagonisms feature on a local, regional or national level, where football stadiums would increasingly become a place of expression of those antagonisms. In the early days of fan culture, the antagonisms remained more or less without any physical confrontation between fans as the fans did not engage in systematic or organized violence. However, the antagonisms that increased through rivalries between football fans, started to surge after 1950s, and by early 1960s there were cases of repeated violent behavior between fans,⁷⁰ where those confrontations were most noticeable in Great Britain and would often made headlines in various media outlets.

3.2. Football hooliganism as the radical expression of fan support

Football hooliganism is a well-researched phenomenon, attracting interested from sociology, psychology, anthropology and political science, where a variety of scholars tried to form an understanding on this phenomenon. Peter Marsh was one of the pioneers in the research on hooliganism, giving a good account on the origins of the term. Marsh argues that “the term ‘hooligan’ derives from the name ‘Houlihan’, a noticeably anti-social Irish family in the nineteenth-century London.”⁷¹ Subsequently, the term was adapted by the media in the U.K. who started from 1970 repeatedly referring to football fans as ‘hooligans’, which was a departure from the usual terms used for referring to the fans, such as ‘ruffians’ or ‘tearaways.’⁷² However, despite the media’s adoption of the term, hooliganism lacked a clear conceptualization, where Hopkins and Treadwell note that the term had no precise legal definition,⁷³ making it increasingly problematic to define.

Dunning and his colleagues attempted to conceptualize hooliganism, arguing that “there is a tendency to deploy the term in a ‘cover-all’ sense to cover a plethora of activities such as

⁷⁰ Vrcan, *Nogomet - politika - nasilje: Ogledi iz Sociologije Nogometa [Football - Politics - Violence: Views from Sociology of Football]*, 80.

⁷¹ Marsh, Rosser, and Harre, *The Rules of Disorder*, 70.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Hopkins and Treadwell, *Football Hooliganism, Fan Behaviour and Crime*, 3.

physical violence, the throwing of missiles at players, officials and other fans; the vandalizing of club and private property; fist fights; fights involving kicking; fights involving weapons such as knives or guns.”⁷⁴ Also, they noted that these activities do not only occur “in the vicinity of football grounds but also in locations that are sometimes far removed from stadia. Nor does it take place only on match days.”⁷⁵ However, Dunning et al. conclude that the main feature of this type of behavior is “fights between groups of males (these groups occasionally include females) who share a common allegiance to opposing football clubs.”⁷⁶ Despite lacking the necessary conceptualization, the meaning of the term hooliganism was mostly negative and related to violence or disorder, although Marsh et al. argue that “football fans have incorporated the term ‘hooligan’ into their own social talk and use it as a term for referring to boys who commit acts generally thought of some praise. Such acts often involve minor damage to property or disruption of certain routine social events.”⁷⁷ Considering this, the term has been differently adopted by separate groups, attributing it both negative and positive meaning, which is an indicator of complexity and volatility of the term.

Markovits and Rensmann give a rather straightforward definition of hooliganism defining it as a “militant, violence-seeking fan group culture, whose behavior is primarily directed against other fan groups or rival teams. It embodies mainly violence for violence’s sake and is foremost a demonstration of male power and aggression. It is frequently characterized by arbitrary, even random violence.”⁷⁸ On the other hand, Collins contrasts this view of hooliganism as mindless violence arguing that hooliganism “is the most sophisticated form of sports violence. Sophisticated because it is deliberately contrived for the sake of having

⁷⁴ Dunning, Murphy, and Waddington, “Anthropological Versus Sociological Approaches to the Study of Soccer Hooliganism: Some Critical Notes,” 459.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Marsh, Rosser, and Harre, *The Rules of Disorder*, 70.

⁷⁸ Markovits and Rensmann, *Gaming the World: How Sports Are Reshaping Global Politics and Culture*, 217.

a good time in excitement of fighting. Hooligan violence usually gets organized in conjunction with a soccer match.”⁷⁹ Not only does Collins add a psychological feature to the term hooliganism, but also argues that the phenomena is organized, systematic and deliberate, which is opposed to Markovits and Rensmann’s view. Collins adds to this that “football hooligans consciously seek the emotional thrills of a fight, with all the legitimating overtones and symbolic resonance that a sports contest provides, but they emancipate themselves from the fate of the team.”⁸⁰ By emphasizing that hooligans consciously make decisions, Collins increasingly argues that hooliganism in its definition should involve some degree of systematization and deliberativeness.

Spaaij acknowledges the problem of conceptualization of hooliganism and like Dunning et al. mentions that hooliganism is often used in “cover-all sense, in which various forms of minor and more serious ‘violence’ are grouped together under the umbrella term ‘football hooliganism’ to refer to football fans who cause ‘damage’ to society.”⁸¹ However, in order to develop a clear-cut definition of football hooliganism, Spaaij firstly distinguishes between two types of incidents of spectator violence, what he terms as spontaneous incidents of spectator violence and competitive violence between socially organized fan groups of opposing football clubs.⁸² Both Spaaij and Dunning argue that the pattern of spontaneous incidents of fan violence, which included attacks on match officials and opposing players and predominated over attacks on rival fans, shifted visibly after mid-1960s to a pattern where inter-fan group fighting became the predominant form of spectator disorderliness.⁸³ This organized, even competitive nature of hooliganism between the opposing fans is the core of Spaaij’s definition.

⁷⁹ Collins, *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory*, 315.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 315–16.

⁸¹ Spaaij, *Understanding football hooliganism*, 11.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Dunning, “The Social Roots of Football Hooliganism: A Reply to the Critics of the ‘Leicester School,’” 131; Spaaij, *Understanding football hooliganism*, 11.

Spaaij develops a clear-cut definition of the term, which says that football hooliganism is “the competitive violence of socially organized fan groups in football, principally directed against opposing fan groups. For hooligan rivalries to develop and persist, the existence of at least one similar, oppositional group is necessary.”⁸⁴ With that in mind, hooliganism is an organized and deliberate action undertaken by fans against other fans, whom they perceived as rivals, and it is also the most physical or violent expression of the fan ritual by making it more about domination and power between opposing fan groups and less about the football match.

That hooliganism is a real issue within the borders of Europe, was already visible in 1985 with the decision of the Council of Europe to draft a convention entitled ‘European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehavior at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches’ aimed at combating hooliganism. The convention envisioned through domestic co-ordination between government and public agencies, international co-operation, better identification and treatment of offenders and sharing of information between interested parties to significantly curb the danger of hooliganism.⁸⁵ This was soon followed by the resolution of the European Union in 1996, when the EU decided to engage more extensively with the problem by issuing the ‘Resolution on Hooliganism and the Free Movement of Football Supporters’⁸⁶ through which the EU offers several policies on how to combat hooliganism. With the involvement of both Council of Europe and the EU, it was obvious that hooliganism demanded a widespread attention both from domestic and international institutions, and that the proper coordination between those institutions was needed to tackle hooliganism.

⁸⁴ Spaaij, *Understanding football hooliganism*, 11.

⁸⁵ Council of Europe, “European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in Particular at Football Matches” (Council of Europe, August 19, 2014), <https://rm.coe.int/168007a086>.

⁸⁶ European Union, “Resolution on Hooliganism and the Free Movement of Football Supporters” (European Union, May 21, 1996), <http://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/364cb755-23b0-4f48-9e6e-ed77961b56a9/language-en>.

3.3. Football and politics – a tight bond

When it comes to fan culture, football and politics, there has always been a connection between those elements. Lalić points out that not only football, but sports in general had been instrumentalized by politics, for achieving political goals such as stable internal consensus in a society, for using sports as a method for venting political discontent or using sports in international relations for creating a desirable picture of a certain state and their social system.⁸⁷ Obviously, football as a game with a large popularity and following, was exposed early on to political influence as politicians looked to use the game for their goals. Vrcan explains this presence of politics in football due to football's "homogenization potential, social divisive antagonizing potential, its ability to create and renew tensions, and its mobilization potential."⁸⁸ Football has a strong tendency to develop lasting bonds and affiliations among people who are involved with it, particularly the fans who are prepared to undertake various actions to reaffirm their affiliation to a certain team. Consequently, football provides politics an emotional and mobilizing space, which they can then use in furthering their own agendas.

Vrcan continues this narrative arguing that "political instrumentalization of football and football fans gets an increased social significance and intensity particularly during situations characterized by great social turbulences."⁸⁹ Football can often be manipulated with, and this manipulation can be extended on to football fans, basically making football and their spectators a potent weapon in the hands of political elites in certain social and political circumstances. The instrumentalization and manipulation of football by the political elites was also observed by Sack and Šuster who stress that football "provides opportunities for thousands of spectators to collectively reaffirm their commitments to beliefs, values and myths that underline their cultural

⁸⁷ Lalić, *Torcida: pogled iznutra [Torcida: View from Inside]*, 197.

⁸⁸ Vrcan, *Nogomet - politika - nasilje: Ogledi iz Sociologije Nogometa [Football - Politics - Violence: Views from Sociology of Football]*, 134.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

identity.”⁹⁰ With that in mind, sport, and in particular football due to its mass popularity has been used as a weapon for political manipulation.⁹¹ Concluding, football and politics have a long established bond.

⁹⁰ Allen L. Sack and Željko Šuster, “Soccer and Croatian Nationalism,” *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 24, no. 3 (2000): 306.

⁹¹ Ibid.

IV. The Origins of Croatian Football Fandom

The main goal of this chapter is to introduce the origins of Croatian football fandom and the beginning of their activism, but also how they got involved with Croatian political elites. The chapter is used as a prelude for the main chapter of the thesis. The first part of the chapter will deal with the foundation of two biggest Croatian football fan groups, and how they immediately after their foundation entered the nationalistic discourse present in Yugoslavia. This will be followed by a chapter dealing with the fandom's relationship with Croatian political elites, and how HDZ used elite manipulation on the fandom to further their political aims. The chapter will be concluded with a peculiar disagreement between the first Croatian president Tudman and the BBB, which signaled the first instance of Croatian football fandom's anti-establishment activities in a newly sovereign Croatia.

4.1. Torcida Split and the Bad Blue Boys Zagreb: politicization and nationalism

The formation of Torcida Split and the Bad Blue Boys (BBB)⁹² have to be traced back to the period of former Yugoslavia. Torcida was established in 1950 as the official fan group of Hajduk Split, but within the first year of its activities, on 1st of November 1950, Torcida was banned by the Yugoslav authorities, who deemed the fan group as threat for spreading hatred between football clubs in Yugoslavia.⁹³ The ban lasted until 1980, after which Torcida reestablished itself as a fan group. On the other hand, although Dinamo Zagreb had a large following, there wasn't an organized fan group until 1986, when a few of the most dedicated Dinamo fans, founded the official fan group of the club, the Bad Blue Boys (BBB).⁹⁴ Both fan groups after their inception became active in the public sphere, which can be related to what

⁹² From here on the fan group Bad Blue Boys will be referred by its acronym BBB.

⁹³ Lalić, *Torcida: pogled iznutra [Torcida: View from Inside]*, 81.

⁹⁴ Bad Blue Boys, "Povijest - Bad Blue Boys [History - Bad Blue Boys]," *Badblueboys.hr*, May 1, 2017, <http://www.badblueboys.hr/povijest/>.

Raschke identifies as an upswing in fan culture in Yugoslavia, that became by the mid-80s a real boom, as the fan scene became known for its rivalries, especially between the fans of Dinamo, Hajduk, Partizan and Red Star.⁹⁵

The fan activities of both Torcida and the BBB in the early 80s had a political overtone and were decisively tied to nationalism. This is not surprising, at least in the case of Yugoslavia, as sport, and particularly football had “early on a political meaning, where sport clubs played an important role in the construction and fostering of national identity in the Yugoslavian space.”⁹⁶ The politicization of football in Yugoslavia was supplemented with nationalism, which started arising in sports more frequently over the years and peaked during the late 1980s, when the stadiums as the usual place of expressions of fan groups became “breeding grounds for nationalist conflicts, especially between football fans from Serbia and Croatia.”⁹⁷ Đorđević and Žikić observe that “newly formed fan groups, created mostly during that decade [the 80s], quickly changed their focus from regular football rivalry to national issues.”⁹⁸ With that in mind, football in Yugoslavia was deeply politicized and embedded with nationalism, where the leading Croatian fan groups Torcida and the BBB did not shy away from using nationalism in their activism.

The political activism of Torcida and the BBB in that period can be described as anti-Yugoslavian and pro-Croatian as “the fans in Split and Zagreb were brining national flags on to the stadium, they were singing songs which were banned due to their ‘nationalistic’ nature or they would express their hatred towards members of different nationalities.”⁹⁹ That political

⁹⁵ Raschke, “Jugoslawien in Der Kurve,” 70–71.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 68.

⁹⁷ Ivan Đorđević and Bojan Žikić, “Normalising Political Relations through Football: The Case of Croatia and Serbia (1990–2013),” in *New Ethnographies of Football in Europe: People, Passions, Politics*, ed. Alexandra Schwell et al., Football Research in an Enlarged Europe (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 39.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Perasović, “Navijačko Pleme - Do Nacije I Natrag [Fan Tribe - To Nation and Back],” 64.

activism featured extensively in the repertoires of fan activity of Torcida and the BBB, was documented by a member of Torcida from that era who notes: “From the start, we as first members of Torcida were drawn into politics. Already then [1980s] we were trying to show off Croatian symbols and chant forbidden slogans.”¹⁰⁰ The presence of nationalism in fan activity of Torcida and the BBB was best seen through the expressions of various Croatian symbols, especially national flags or songs with nationalistic connotations. Torcida led a sustained campaign to return the legitimacy of national symbols, particularly of the Croatian national flag and the Croatian coat of arms,¹⁰¹ and had been successful, as already by 1990, the flags of the Republics were completely replaced by national flags.¹⁰²

The displays of the Croatian national flags by Torcida and the BBB within Yugoslavia had a symbolic meaning. This can be seen through Billig’s concept of flagging, where Billig points out that flags have several functions from serving as ‘condensation symbol’ and as ‘a focus for sentiment about society’ to symbolizing the sacred character of the nation, where the manner of flag’s display can on occasions provide a signal.¹⁰³ By using the Croatian national flags as part of their fan ritual and iconography, Torcida and the BBB positioned themselves against the Yugoslav identity, while addressing and reaffirming their own Croatian national identity. Effectively, Croatian football fandom acted as a bearer of Croatian nationalism and nationhood, especially during a period when the nationalistic expressions were banned in most public places, apart from football stadiums who essentially became “the ‘national vanguard’, a sounding board for nationalist rhetoric.”¹⁰⁴ Torcida and the BBB by repeatedly using national flags legitimized Croatian national symbols and helped in the Croatian nation-building project.

¹⁰⁰ Lalić, *Torcida: pogled iznutra [Torcida: View from Inside]*, 92.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 205.

¹⁰² Raschke, “Jugoslawien in Der Kurve,” 80.

¹⁰³ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ Đorđević and Žikić, “Normalising Political Relations through Football: The Case of Croatia and Serbia (1990–2013),” 39.

The importance that the displays of national flags by the fandom had for Croatian nationalism is best seen through the Poljud incident, which occurred on the 26th of September 1990. During the game, Torcida made a political statement by invading the pitch and setting the Yugoslav flag on fire and hoisting the Croatian check-board flag while chanting ‘Croatia – independent state.’¹⁰⁵ By burning the Yugoslav flag, Croatian football fans symbolically “dismantled” the legitimacy of Yugoslavia and its most important symbol and simultaneously positioned Yugoslav identity as the essential other to the dominant Croatian identity. It can be concluded that the early years of Torcida and the BBB were predominantly characterized by political activism, nationalism and fostering of Croatian identity.

4.2. Croatian Football Fandom: political support for HDZ and elite manipulation

An element that characterized the early activity of Torcida and the BBB was their support for Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), which gives further credence to their political activism. HDZ led by Franjo Tuđman, realized early on the importance that sport could have in promoting Croatian nationalism. HDZ used sport for what Brentin describes as “icebreaker for future political developments and an influential transmitter of political and symbolic messages.”¹⁰⁶ For HDZ the best available transmitters of both political and symbolic messages through sports, were various fan groups who counted large memberships, and as such HDZ looked to influence them for their goals of promoting Croatian nationalism. It has to be noted that HDZ counted on influencing the fan groups through its position in the society, as HDZ did not only shaped itself as a political party, but also as a “national movement that aimed at connecting all Croatians in the country and in the diaspora,”¹⁰⁷ a political platform which

¹⁰⁵ Brentin, ““A Lofty Battle for the Nation,”” 997.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 994.

¹⁰⁷ Dario Nikić Čakar, *Prezidencijalizacija Političkih Stranaka [Presidentialization of Political Parties]* (Zagreb: Političke analize, 2013), 192.

appealed to Torcida and the BBB. With that HDZ managed to acquire widespread support for their activities, both from the public and the fan groups alike.

Since its foundation in 1989, HDZ enjoy a large popularity amongst members of Torcida and members of other fan groups in Croatia.¹⁰⁸ It wasn't uncommon that members of Torcida or Dinamo would often attend political meetings to express their support for HDZ. A notable research that deals with the level of political activity and support for HDZ associated with Croatian fan groups was conducted in March 1991 by Lalić, who by conducting a survey on the members of Torcida discovered that more than half (56,2%) out of 108 members of the core group of Torcida had actively participated in some form of political activity in the period between 1990-1991.¹⁰⁹ HDZ was also actively supported by the BBB, who not only supported the political party through banners and signs, but also openly cooperated with the party, where Raschke points out a statement of a member of the BBB regarding their involvement in political campaigns: "We the Bad Blue Boys took part in all political campaigns in which Croatian political parties were represented... we felt that finally the time has come for us to receive our own State."¹¹⁰

HDZ used its position and influence along with elite manipulation for expanding its political goals. An element of elite manipulation view is that nationalism is a product of manipulative political elites, who intentionally stir up nationalist passions for achieving their agendas.¹¹¹ In other words, elite manipulation has to be seen as a top-down approach on influencing the behavior of certain groups and instrumentalizing them for private goals. There have been examples where HDZ as Croatian political elites used elite manipulation for their

¹⁰⁸ Lalić, *Torcida: pogled iznutra [Torcida: View from Inside]*, 166.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 206.

¹¹⁰ Raschke, "Jugoslawien in Der Kurve," 80.

¹¹¹ Brubaker, "Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism," 273.

cause. Such a instrumentalization was best evident through the hooligan incident that involved the BBB, known as the Maksimir incident.

The Maksimir incident occurred on the 13th of May 1990, and in short, the game between Dinamo Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade had to be suspended due to violent clashes between the fans of Dinamo and Red Star. The BBB found themselves in the nick of the violence, clashing with the opposing fans and the police, which was regarded by the Croatian public as an instrument of Serb domination. The incident gathered significant political attention, which led to a widespread politicization of the event. Sack and Šuster noted that “the riot that broke out in Zagreb centered on clear political themes and bore the hallmarks of a planned campaign, where the BBB and Delije,¹¹² were as much paramilitary organizations as they were fan clubs revealing an intimate connection between sport, ethnoreligious politics, and warfare.”¹¹³ Directly related to the incident, was the raise in ethnic tensions, which flared during the first multiparty elections in Croatia, two weeks prior the incident.

HDZ won the 1990 elections on a campaign revolving around the need to affirm Croatian national and religious identity.¹¹⁴ Soon after the elections HDZ started promoting policies that were anti-Serb¹¹⁵ by promising to limit the influence of Serbs in all spheres of public life,¹¹⁶ which led to further increase in Croat-Serb tensions prior the Maksimir incident. Subsequently, HDZ manipulated the narrative of the Maksimir incident and used the incident as a prelude for pushing forward their main demand, which was “the reduction of Belgrade-based governmental influence over police and state institutions in Croatia.”¹¹⁷ With HDZ’s

¹¹² Delije (Heroes in English) is the name of the official fan group of Red Star Belgrade.

¹¹³ Sack and Šuster, “Soccer and Croatian Nationalism,” 310–11.

¹¹⁴ Paula M. Pickering and Mark Baskin, “What Is to Be Done? Succession from the League of Communists of Croatia,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 41, no. 4 (December 2008): 528.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 530.

¹¹⁶ Sack and Šuster, “Soccer and Croatian Nationalism,” 312.

¹¹⁷ Brentin, ““A Lofty Battle for the Nation,”” 996.

concentration on the police as the main cause of the Maksimir incident, the incident itself was not portrayed as an act of hooliganism, but as an act of resistance of Croatian fans against Serb dominated Yugoslav institutions. With that narrative, HDZ created an impression of the police as being exclusively an instrument of Serb domination, thereby HDZ as the leader of the Croats has a duty to establish a police that would serve the people of Croatia. HDZ was seeking to gain more power by controlling the police and the administration. Soon after the incident HDZ gained power over police and public institutions by removing Serbs from jobs in government and administration.¹¹⁸ Considering this, HDZ managed to use the ethnic tensions for its own political agendas.

4.3. The Bad Blue Boys against President Tudman: limits of elite manipulation

Croatian football fandom throughout the last years of Yugoslavia had been one of the staunchest supporters of HDZ. However, the support that HDZ enjoyed both from Torcida and the BBB diminished, and already in the early years of Croatia's sovereignty, Torcida and then the BBB started actively turning on HDZ. This was in part caused by clear favoritism that Dinamo as a club enjoyed by President Tuđman, the president of HDZ, and the most powerful person in the country. Perasović observes that when the intensity of the fighting in the Homeland war decreased, Torcida started turning on HDZ by chanting during the games of Croatian football league 'BBB for HDZ', which was understood by the people present in the stadium as a clear insult.¹¹⁹ The favoritism and the involvement of HDZ in Dinamo provoked also unrest amongst the BBB who disliked the fact that politicians were using the club for their own agenda. Although the resistance started from sport ideals, it quickly turned political and ideological when Tuđman decided to change the name of Dinamo into Croatia Zagreb, and by doing so, incurred the fury of the BBB, which also signaled the first time that the Croatian

¹¹⁸ Pickering and Baskin, "What Is to Be Done?," 530.

¹¹⁹ Perasović, "Navijačko Pleme - Do Nacije I Natrag [Fan Tribe - To Nation and Back]," 67.

football fandom went against the party whom they considered to be the representation of Croatian nationhood.

The name change of the football club Dinamo to Croatia provoked a highly ideological and symbolic dispute, which translated into violent confrontations between HDZ controlled police and the BBB. The peculiar dispute is an example when the elite manipulation purposely used by HDZ failed and became a burden to the governing elites, especially when the naming dispute escalated into violent conflicts, where more than 70 people were injured and over 200 people, mostly BBB fans, were detained.¹²⁰ To understand the issue and how it led to HDZ's failed manipulation, one needs to examine two cases of name change of Dinamo, the first one 1991 and the second in 1993.

In June 1991, HDZ renamed Dinamo as *HAŠK-Gradanski*,¹²¹ which to many symbolized a return to a pre-communist Croatian football culture.¹²² One of the arguments that HDZ used for changing the name was the claim that Dinamo is the successor of Zagreb interwar clubs *HAŠK*, *Gradanski* and *Concordija*, who were active until 1945, when they were disbanded by the Communist authorities due to their participation in the leagues organized by the *Ustaši* regime. HDZ argued that the continuity between interwar period clubs and Dinamo exists through Dinamo's adoption of blue colors of *Gradanski* and that of city of Zagreb, but also by taking players and supporters of *Gradanski*, *HAŠK* and *Concordija*.¹²³ Some claims were, in fact, rooted in history, such as the club colors, which were adopted from *Gradanski*, or the stadium that Dinamo uses was used prior to the war by *HAŠK*, where the new club name was a hybrid blend of two different clubs.

¹²⁰ Vrcan, *Nogomet - politika - nasilje: Ogledi iz Sociologije Nogometa [Football - Politics - Violence: Views from Sociology of Football]*, 201.

¹²¹ HAŠK is an acronym for Croatian Academic Sports Club (*Hrvatski akademski športski klub*).

¹²² Sindbæk, "A Croatian Champion with a Croatian Name," 1009.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 1004.

Several reasons can be observed as to why the BBB did not react as vigorously to the first name change as they did to the second one. One reason for the milder reaction is certainly related to the fact that the name change bared some historical credibility. Other reasons are tied directly to the outbreak of the Yugoslav war in 1991, which led to two unique developments. Due to the war, football activities in Croatia, especially during the years of heavy fighting between autumn 1991 and winter 1992, were cancelled, and only in spring 1992 the first edition of the Croatian football league commenced, where Dinamo played under the name *HAŠK-Grđanski*.¹²⁴ Since the name change happened in June 1991 and there were no competitive games until spring 1992, the BBB did not have the opportunity to express their discontent at the most usual venue of expressions – the stadium. Also, Tuđman and HDZ benefited from extraordinary circumstances caused by the war, giving them the freedom to manipulate with Croatian football without interference from the fans. Another reason that the reaction from the fans was absent is related to the mobilization of many BBB members in the war as many of them joined as volunteers in the army immediately after the outbreak of the Homeland war.¹²⁵ The involvement of the BBB in the war meant that the core members of the group, and the most politically outspoken ones were on the battlefield and thus unable to actively express their discontent over the name change.

HDZ was able to manipulate Croatian football from the period of mid-1991 to 1993, as the issues of state-recognition of Croatia or the defense of the territory were far more pressing than events related to football, thus HDZ had an open field to manipulate football for its own causes, especially manipulating the football club of Dinamo to make it more appropriate for the new elites. The name itself had a communist past, something the new elites wanted purposely

¹²⁴ Nogometplus, “Povijest HNL-a [History of HNL],” *Nogomet Plus*, March 2, 2014, <http://www.nogometplus.net/index.php/naslovna/povijest-hnl-a/>.

¹²⁵ Dražen Lalić, “Bad Blue Boys I Torcida [Bad Blue Boys and Torcida],” *Erasmus - Journal for Culture of Democracy*, no. 10 (1995): 52.

to avoid, as they themselves stemmed from a communist background, where around 97,000 people left the League of Communists of Croatia to join HDZ.¹²⁶ The party was looking to shed this perception by any means necessary, even if it means to use football to portray themselves as Croatian nationalists. Thus, the manipulation of symbolism of Dinamo was along the lines of HDZ's policy of revolution of symbols, in which Croatian symbols deemed pro-communist were made "more" Croatian.

However, by 1993 the limit of elite manipulation was reached when Tuđman decided again to switch the name of the club to Croatia Zagreb. There are several reasons why HDZ was so insistent in changing the name of Dinamo, the communist past was only one of them. Foremost, for HDZ the name Dinamo as Vrcan explains it was an alien term which did not fit into the cultural, ideological and symbolic fund that HDZ regarded as their own, obviously referring to HDZ's specific vision of Croatianess.¹²⁷ Dinamo "by substance and symbolism belonged to the political, ideological and cultural circle, which for HDZ had a thorough negative connotation," meaning communism and Yugoslavia, which was regarded as anti-patriotic and anti-Croatian. As HDZ intended to use football for promotion of Croatian national identity on an international level, the club, in the eyes of HDZ, could not have a communist name attached to it, as it would contradict the basic essence of Croatian identity, being anti-communist.

Vrcan poignantly explains that Dinamo did not have for HDZ the needed "identification, mobilization or homogenization power, nor symbolical-national effect"¹²⁸ as HDZ looked for something that would correspond to their nationalistic narrative, and Croatia as a new club name fitted the bill. For HDZ the name Croatia had "all the political advantages that the Croatian nationalism and Croatian nationalist system would welcome: it was synonymous with the name

¹²⁶ Pickering and Baskin, "What Is to Be Done?," 528.

¹²⁷ Vrcan, *Nogomet - politika - nasilje: Ogledi iz Sociologije Nogometa [Football - Politics - Violence: Views from Sociology of Football]*, 205.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 206.

of the fatherland and it belonged to the football tradition of Croatian anti-communist extreme nationalist emigrants,”¹²⁹ who played a significant role in the establishment of the new country. Vrcan continues that the new name Croatia could create national homogenization and identification along national lines, and most importantly serve for international political affirmation of Croatia through football.¹³⁰ At the time of the early to mid-90s HDZ was looking for a full-fledged international recognition, which would act as an enforcer for HDZ’s national legitimacy and stronger grip on power.

HDZ did not anticipated that the manipulation would receive a backlash from the unlikeliest opposition, the BBB. For the BBB, the name Dinamo bared a completely different meaning than it did to HDZ. Primarily, for the members of the BBB the name Dinamo was through the years “localized (*Zagrebised*) and nationalized (*Croatised*) based on the longstanding fan ritual experiences of the BBB, which included remembering their spectacular achievements on Maksimir stadium, on the streets or squares of Zagreb.”¹³¹ The name Dinamo essentially became the main reference point for the BBB, a signifier of their identity, where they made the name their own, constructed through years of ardent support for the club. Through that the communist attachment essentially vanished and became a symbol of Croatian identity and opposition against Yugoslavia. The meaning the name Dinamo has for its fans can be seen by the survey conducted by Vujević. Vujević surveyed 403 respondents between the age 15 to 22, 193 whom were supporters of Dinamo, and he discovered that the respondents favored the name Dinamo over Croatia Zagreb, where 81% favored Dinamo, and only 19% preferred Croatia Zagreb, which Vujević attributes to the predominant experience of relating Dinamo to Croatian national identity, whereas the name Croatia Zagreb was forced upon the

¹²⁹ Srđan Vrcan, “The Curious Drama of the President of a Republic Versus a Football Fan Tribe A Symptomatic Case in the Post-Communist Transition in Croatia,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 37, no. 1 (2002): 63.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Sindbæk, “A Croatian Champion with a Croatian Name,” 1009.

fans and caused resistance, and the opposition grew only bigger when it became evident that the goal was to suppress the name of Dinamo.¹³² HDZ's goal to manipulate the name of Dinamo backfired significantly, as the fans related the name Dinamo to Croatian identity, which wasn't the case with the name Croatia Zagreb.

There are several reasons that led to the exhaustion of HDZ's manipulation of football and its fans. Firstly, by the time the name Croatia Zagreb was adopted in February 1993, Croatian football league was up and running for the 1992/93 season, and the BBB resumed its activities including their political activism. This is a contrast to the prior name change of Dinamo into *HAŠK-Građanski*, when due to the outbreak of war all football related activities were non-existent, directly impacting the operating capacity of the fan groups, who were more orientated towards mobilization into Croatian military. However, the fighting decreased by 1993 and the BBB resumed their usual activities, which Lalić and Vrcan observe as the return of routine where members of fan groups return from battlefields to the soccer stadium.¹³³ HDZ lacked the needed national mobilization which was seen prior and immediately after the outbreak of the war to divert the name change issue, but also it faced by 1993 a large opposition than during the first name change.

Another problem that HDZ faced with its name change of Dinamo into Croatia Zagreb was that the name change was a complete invention from the governing elites, an example of top-down approach on enforcing a certain name or newly made symbol to the fans. HDZ tried with renaming Dinamo into Croatia to invent a new tradition in the service of the governing elites. Hobsbawm points out that "invented tradition is a set of practices, normally governed by

¹³² Miroslav Vujević, "Semantički Profil Imena NK 'Dinamo' I NK 'Croatia' [Semantic Profile of Names: FC 'Dinamo' and FC 'Croatia']," *Politička Misao* 37, no. 1 (2000): 143–46.

¹³³ Srđan Vrcan and Dražen Lalić, "From Ends to Trenches, and Back: Football in the Former Yugoslavia," in *Football Cultures and Identities*, ed. Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1999), 181.

overtly of tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”¹³⁴ Croatia Zagreb as a newly constructed name of the club did not have any continuity with the past, nor did HDZ understood that the name Dinamo had symbolic, practical and real ties to history for the fans, which made it a significant part of the fan identity, and with that the manipulation, which was part of HDZ’s construction of Croatian identity through sports, failed. Despite the opposition by the BBB, HDZ maintained the name Croatia Zagreb for 7 years (1993-2000), which is also an example how powerful Tuđman was within Croatia, as he could, despite criticism, push forward his agendas.

The name Dinamo was returned on February 2000. However, the relationship between HDZ and the BBB was diminished to the point that ever since the incident the BBB remained vocally opposed to HDZ, but also to HNS, which was an extension of HDZ. After the death of Tuđman in December 1999, there was a power vacuum in Croatian politics, which was also felt in football. A good account of the power vacuum in Croatia, which led to the future resistance of Croatian fandom against HNS was given by Marko Mustapić who said the following:

After the breakdown of Tuđman’s system and the change of our [Croatian] constitution in 2000, when the semi-presidential system was changed into a full parliamentary system with the government as the key institution, you have a certain vacuum, in which Zdravko Mamić entered with his associates, and in which he succeeded, step by step, by the mid-2000 to take control over and monopolize football just like other actors monopolized other sectors in economy.¹³⁵

Mamić soon became the dominating figure of Croatian football, a position which he managed to achieve with the backing of HDZ, where his hegemony soon led to direct confrontations with Croatian football fandom, that escalated in the beginning of the new decade.

¹³⁴ Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 1.

¹³⁵ Marko Mustapić, Interview with the author, Varaždin, 21 April 2017.

V. Croatian Football Fandom in Contention with HNS: A Contemporary Social Movement

The main aim of this chapter is to research contemporary Croatian football fandom and its contention with HNS, and how through this struggle the fandom developed into a fluid social movement that not only includes the initiators of the movement, the fans, but also people who are not involved in football on a daily basis, and cannot be considered as football fans. The chapter includes the fieldwork I conducted in April 2017, which should give the necessary information to develop firm conclusions for the research. I also intend to use this chapter to research what kind of means of collective action did Croatian football fandom use as a social movement in their contention with HNS, with a keen emphasis on instrumentalization of violence, disorder and nationalist symbols.

The chapter will consist of four subchapters. First subchapter will research HNS as the main opponent of contention for the fans, to understand why the fans fight against this institution, how is this related to Croatian political elites, and how does HNS respond to the fans as claim-makers. Following up on that, the focus will turn to the fan groups of Torcida and the BBB as the opposition to HNS by covering the period of the current decade (2010-17) to maintain the limitations of the thesis. The subsequent subchapters will then explore the crucial means of contention that the fandom uses against HNS, where a subchapter will be dedicated to the conventional means of contention and another subchapter for analyzing unconventional means of contention. Unconventional means of contention will be explored through two notorious hooligan incidents, incidents in Milano and Split. Lastly, value expectancy theory (VET) will be used to develop an understanding of those incidents and how they can be framed within the fandom's social movement.

5.1. Croatian Football Federation: a tale of corruption

HNS is the leading institution in charge of football and has been since Croatia gained sovereignty. Nowadays the institution is perceived both by the public and by the football fans as a synonym for corruption. In the current decade, HNS and some of its board members have been frequently involved in various illegal activities, to the point that it is impossible to examine all within the scope of this thesis. The thesis will cover only the most prominent cases. One of the first notable cases of corruption within Croatian football happened in 2010, when Croatian police in cooperation with State Attorney's Office of Republic Croatia indicted 22 people, football players and private citizens under the suspicion for match-fixing in Croatian Football League (HNL), and in the end 15 of the people involved were found guilty and convicted in 2011.¹³⁶ The match-fixing scandal damaged the reputation of HNS, and was followed by another scandal. In late 2011, then vice-president of HNS, Željko Širić and Stjepan Djedović, president of HNS' Referee Commission, were arrested for demanding and receiving bribes for 'fair refereeing' and subsequently as official persons influencing through the Referee Commission the results in HNL. Perasović and Mustapić noted that Djedović pleaded guilty for his involvement, whereas Širić got a four-year prison sentenced in 2014.¹³⁷

The biggest scandal that incriminated HNS for corruption and illegal activities, occurred in 2015 when Zdravko Mamić, executive vice president of HNS and Dinamo, along with Damir Vrbanić, executive vice president of HNS and vice president of the UEFA Club Competitions Committees, were arrested after an organized action between Croatian institutions and

¹³⁶ Perasović and Mustapić, "Carnival Supporters, Hooligans, and the 'Against Modern Football' Movement," 6; Predrag Jurišić et al., "Akcija Offside: Zараđivali I Do 300 Tisuća Eura Po Lažiranoj Utakmici [Operation Offside: They Earned up to 300 000 Euros per Fixed Match]," *Večernji List*, June 8, 2010, <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/akcija-offside-zaradjivali-i-do-300-tisuca-eura-po-laziranoj-utakmici-152240>.

¹³⁷ Perasović and Mustapić, "Carnival Supporters, Hooligans, and the 'Against Modern Football' Movement," 6–7.

international agencies such as Interpol. They were arrested under the suspicion of embezzling through Croatian football over 15 million euros over various off-shore companies, but also for 1.64 million euros of unpaid taxes.¹³⁸ The incident further stipulated the perception of HNS as a domain of corruption and illegal activities, particularly as Zdravko Mamić, the *de facto* head of Croatian football, has been seen by the fandom, media and the wider public as the embodiment of problems in Croatian football.

That corruption and nepotism is a real issue within HNS, was also voiced by Perasović:

There are several facts indicating deep corruption and personal interlinkage between actors around HNS, so we cannot talk about some arbitrary stories made up by discontent people, but real facts, where you have some clear things [indicating corruption] such as favoring certain players in national team to raise their market value, to examples of demonstrating power that certain someone is the boss [Mamić] and that he can do with Croatian football whatever he likes.¹³⁹

On the other hand, Islamović and Jurišić consider that along with corruption, the lack of transparency and the unwillingness of HNS to actively combat issues in Croatian football further promulgates HNS as the main problem of Croatian football. Islamović points out that “HNS as a body of public authority, is an important institution for Croatia and should present their operations to the public through the ‘Law on the Right to Access Information,’ but nothing in HNS is publicly transparent,”¹⁴⁰ whereas Jurišić said that the key problem is in “HNS’ inactivity in dealing with issues of corruption, where HNS instead of joining the fight against corruption, remains silent and argues that nothing of the sort is happening.”¹⁴¹ HNS’ current

¹³⁸ Ana Raić-Knežević and Tajana Vlašić, “Uhićeni Zdravko Mamić I Njegov Sin Mario. Na Transferima Igrača Navodno Su Oštetili Dinamo Za 78 Milijuna Kuna [Zdravko Mamić and His Son Mario Have Been Arrested. Allegedly, Their Player Transfers Have Impaired Dinamo for 78 Million Kunas],” *Telegram.hr*, November 18, 2015, <http://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/uhiceni-zdravko-mamic-i-sin-mario-navodno-na-transferima-igraca-ostetili-drzavu-za-78-milijuna-kuna/>.

¹³⁹ Benjamin Perasović, Interview with the author, Varaždin, 23 April 2017.

¹⁴⁰ Bojan Islamović, Interview with the author, Split, 10 April 2017.

¹⁴¹ Bernard Jurišić, Interview with the author, Split 10 April 2017.

position is safeguarded by HDZ, as there are many examples, that HNS is under the influence of HDZ. It is sufficient to say that Executive Committee of HNS, the highest executive body of HNS, consists of 17 members, 11 of whom are notable members of HDZ,¹⁴² thus making the body firmly under control of HDZ. Even Mamić, the “boss” of Croatian football, is known to be a firm supporter of HDZ with deep ties to Croatian political elites. All these ties develop an interpersonal network which makes HNS dependent on HDZ.

On the other hand, HNS accuses Croatian football fandom, as the solely responsible for the terrible state of football, referring to fans as hooligans who are holding “hostage” with their activities Croatian football, clubs and the national team.¹⁴³ HNS goes even further in their claim that the fans represent the main problem of Croatian football by labeling the fans as terrorists¹⁴⁴ or criminals,¹⁴⁵ an anti-state element who with their “apparent” penchant for violence are sending Croatian football into a state of disarray. HNS gathered support for its claim of “explosion of hooliganism” in Croatia from the former UEFA president Michel Platini, who proclaimed that Croatia’s biggest problem was hooliganism which is overshadowing everything good in Croatian football.¹⁴⁶ This was repeated by the current UEFA president Čeferin, who

¹⁴² Zvonko Alač, “Mamićevu I Šukerovu ‘vladu’ slaže - Karamarko: Više HDZ-Ovaca U IO HNS-A, Nego U Remetincu! [Mamić and Šuker’s ‘Government’ is Constructed by Karamarko: More HDZ Members in Executive Committee of HNS than in Remetinec],” *Index.hr*, November 24, 2014, <http://www.index.hr/sport/clanak/permalink/739913.aspx>.

¹⁴³ Delač, “Oglasio Se I HNS, Evo Što Kaže O Hooliganskom Ispadu Na Poljudu! [HNS Responded, This Is What They Said about the Hooligan Incident on Poljud!].”

¹⁴⁴ Hina, “Čačić: ‘To Nisu Navijači, to Su teroristi’ [Čačić: ‘Those Are Not Fans, Those Are Terrorists’],” *Sportnet*, June 17, 2016, <http://sportnet.rtl.hr/vijesti/495513/nogomet-reprezentacija/cacic-to-nisu-navijaci-to-su-teroristi/>.

¹⁴⁵ Gol.hr, “Hajduk Uzvratilo HNS-U: ‘Etiketirate Navijače, a Protiv Nogometnog Okupatora Je Potvrđena Optužnica’ [Hajduk Responded to HNS: ‘You Are Labeling the Fans, yet There Is a Confirmed Indictment against the Footballing Occupator],” *Gol.hr*, February 19, 2017, <http://gol.dnevnik.hr/clanak/rubrika/nogomet/hajduk-uzvratilo-hns-u-etiketirate-navijace-a-protiv-nogometnog-okupatora-je-potvrđena-optuznica---467364.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Antena Zagreb, “Platini: Hooliganizam Je Vaš Najveći Problem - Prvi.hr [Platini: Hooliganism Is Your Biggest Problem - Prvi.hr],” *Prvi.hr*, December 5, 2012, <http://www.prvi.hr/antenzagreb-zagreb/vijesti-antena/platini-hooliganizam-je-vas-najveci-problem>.

said that Croatia needs to deal with the issue of hooliganism or be faced with exclusion from international competitions.¹⁴⁷

HNS rhetoric of Croatian fans as hooligans was enhanced by support given to them both by HDZ and by the President of Croatia, Grabar Kitarović who referred to the fans after an incident as *orjunaši*,¹⁴⁸ arguing that the fans are not only terrorist for their hooligan acts, but also political extremists intend to harm the reputation of Croatia. Finally, Davor Šuker, the current president of HNS, stressed that the main problem of Croatian football is hooliganism, noting that he is concerned about the increase of hooliganism on the football fields, which apparently cost HNS over one million euros in paid fines to FIFA or UEFA.¹⁴⁹

However, when taking a closer look at the official data issued by Ministry of Interior about hooliganism acts, which falls under the domain of ‘Act on the Prevention of Violence at Sporting Events’ for a seven year period between 2010 and 2016, one notices that the amount of hooligan acts fluctuates between a slight increase and decrease over the years, with the most incidents occurring in the year 2013, with a notable decline of hooligan activities from 2015 onwards, thereby contradicting Šuker’s statement. It has to be noted that one drawback from the Ministry’s officials statistics is that hooliganism is put as an umbrella term including a range of other misdemeanors that are accounted within the ‘Act on the Prevention of Violence at

¹⁴⁷ Sportarena.hr, “Čeferin: Srbija i Hrvatska Moraju Se Riješiti Hooligana [Čeferin: Serbia and Croatia Need to Deal with Hooligans],” *Sportarena.hr*, April 1, 2017, <https://sportarena.hr/nogomet/ceferin-srbija-i-hrvatska-moraju-se-rijesiti-hooligana/>.

¹⁴⁸ Orjunaši – Is a name for the members of the Orjuna, which was an extreme nationalistic and terrorist organization founded in 1921 in Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Their main goals were protecting the Yugoslav unitarism by using methods of terror and political violence against their political opponents. The group itself was mostly marginal during their activities, and the term itself was not mentioned in the public discourse until Grabar Kitarović used it against Croatian football fandom. For more: <http://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/tko-su-orjunasi--440738.html>

¹⁴⁹ Hrvoje Tironi, “Šuker: Predložiti Ću Novi Ugovor Čačiću [Šuker: I Will Propose a New Contract for Čačić],” *Goal.com*, March 14, 2017, <http://www.goal.com/hr/news/7081/hrvatska-reprezentacija/2017/03/14/33638232/%C5%A1uker-predlo%C5%BEit-%C4%87u-novi-ugovor-%C4%8Da%C4%8Di%C4%87u-sanirat-%C4%87emo-terene-u>.

Sporting Events,' but cannot be regarded as acts of hooliganism, a notable example of this being intoxication in sports arenas, which is considered within the same act, but does not really relate to hooliganism, thus the real number of hooligan incidents should be smaller than the official numbers indicate.

Table 1: Number of Hooligan incidents within the 'Act on the Prevention of Violence at Sporting events' for the period between 2010-2016

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of incidents	1.125	734	1.046	1.350	1.061	1.104	1.070

Source: Ministry of the Interior, "Statistics," *Republic of Croatia Ministry of the Interior*, May 12, 2017, <http://stari.mup.hr/1261.aspx>.

That the issue of hooliganism and its supposed increase in Croatian society is exaggerated by HNS, was also confirmed by the interviewees for the thesis. On a direct question is there an increase of hooliganism in Croatian football in recent years, six out of seven participants answered negatively, with the exception of Jurišić who sees the increase as a result of a complete disarray of Croatian football, something that drew people to the game who are not interested in football, but are looking to use the mass for some other means.¹⁵⁰ Holiga believes that there was more hooliganism on the stadiums in the past, when the situation in Croatian football was more competitive,¹⁵¹ pointing to the ten year dominance of Mamić's club Dinamo that lowered the interest in football, and thus the rivalries were not as explosive as they were before. Petranović believes that the issue of hooliganism is purposely overblown by HNS, stating the following:

¹⁵⁰ Bernard Jurišić, Interview with the author.

¹⁵¹ Aleksandar Holiga, Interview with the author, Zagreb, 14 April 2017.

The problem [hooliganism] is exaggerated in the public through media close to HNS, because it is used for diverting attention. They [HNS] want to create a smokescreen under which they want to hide their issues, which includes accusations against Zdravko Mamić and the leading structures of HNS.¹⁵²

Hooliganism is present in Croatian football and it is an issue that needs to be properly addressed, but HNS is clearly and purposely portraying the problem in an overstated manner, especially by referring to the fandom as terrorists, political extremists or criminals, thereby creating a stigma about the fans in the public discourse, but also creating an environment for moral panic, where Croatian President or President of FIFA or UEFA are getting involved. HNS' exaggeration about hooliganism correlates to Stanley Cohen's theory of moral panic, which Cohen defines as:

“A condition, episode, persons or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, politicians and other right-thinking people; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible.”¹⁵³

Cohen adds that moral panic is often accompanied with exaggeration and distortion by “exaggerating grossly the seriousness of the events, in terms of criteria such as the number taking part, the number involved in violence and the amount and effects of any damage or violence.”¹⁵⁴ In the case of Croatian football, HNS through its insistence that the fandom should be regarded as the biggest threat not only to football, but also to the reputation of Croatia on an international scene, create an environment for moral panic, where the issue of hooliganism is overexaggerated and distorted, making the fandom look like the biggest threat to societal values. However, when comparing the official numbers about hooligan incidents issued by the

¹⁵² Damir Petranović, Interview with the author, Split, 10 April 2017.

¹⁵³ Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics : The Creation of the Mods and Rockers.*, Third edition (London: Routledge, 2002), 1, <http://it.ceu.hu/vpn>.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 19–20.

Ministry of Interior, it becomes clear that HNS exaggerates the problem to divert the attention from illegalities within its own ranks.

Coincidentally, members of Torcida and the BBB have been the loudest opposition pointing out the illegalities in HNS, thereby becoming their biggest threat to power. HNS recognizing where the threat to their power lies, tried through stereotypical portrayal of all Croatian fans as hooligans discredit them in the public, which they in part succeeded as Croatian authorities accepted the view of HNS, making the moral panic used by HNS feasible. Generally, HNS uses the issue of hooliganism to divert the public attention from issues of corruption in their own ranks. Since the authorities sided with HNS, the fans have been left in a limbo, which provoked them to start systematically organizing their contention with HNS.

5.2. The BBB and Torcida as the main organized opposition to HNS

The organized movement from Croatian football fandom against HNS developed out of two centers, Split and Zagreb, and the opposition is led by the BBB and Torcida. Both groups had over the years various disputes with HNS. Torcida resented the fact that the leadership of HNS favored interests of one club (Dinamo) and interests of a group of people led by Mamić.¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, the BBB was early in the decade in conflict with Mamić, who despite being on paper an executive vice-president of Dinamo, was in fact the “boss,” in complete control of the club. Generally, the activities of the fandom against HNS in the first few years of the decade were sporadic, but they started to intensify when the scandals related to HNS started to appear publicly.

An important element that provoked increasing activism of the fandom against HNS and its illegal activities was the lack of reaction by the Croatian authorities, notably the police or the State’s Attorney office of Republic of Croatia, who did not decisively engage in battling

¹⁵⁵ Lalić, *Torcida: pogled iznutra [Torcida: View from Inside]*, 300.

corruption in Croatian football. Interviewees identify several reasons why the authorities did not address the problem. Holiga mentions the interlinkage between Croatian political elites and HNS as the biggest obstacle in resolving the issues of criminal activities in Croatian football: “From the start of Croatian independence to the present day, Executive Committee of HNS had always 2/3 of HDZ members and it was always under its control. HNS was never *detudmanized* like other spheres of society in Croatia were.”¹⁵⁶ The interlinkage between political elites and HNS allowed HNS to resume over the years undeterred their activities.

However, on the question why the state institutions or political parties do not want to solve the irregularities in Croatian football, interviewees point out also a lack of political will. Brentin notes that if the political will would exist then the problem of illegal activities would not be an issue in a member state of EU, where by its membership, the rule of law should be established.¹⁵⁷ The lack of political will was also voiced by Jurišić, who mentions that sport as such causes strong emotions, which can influence negatively the position of political parties among voters, so they are hesitant to react: “When you touch sport, people can get easily fired-up, people, sadly, get more agitated when somebody touches their club, then when someone touches their company or livelihood. A lot of those political authorities and opposition concluded that it is better to leave it [football] untouched.”¹⁵⁸ The lack of political will coupled with strong emotions that sports invokes among the general population in Croatia has led to a situation where authorities stand on the sidelines instead of actively combating the irregularities.

Subsequently, with the lack of interest from the authorities, Croatian football fandom effectively became the main organized opposition against HNS. That the fandom is shaped as

¹⁵⁶ Aleksandar Holiga, Interview with the author.

¹⁵⁷ Dario Brentin, Interview with the author, Varaždin, 25 April, 2017.

¹⁵⁸ Bernard Jurišić, Interview with the author.

the main opposition against HNS was also confirmed by the interviewees, as all seven participants when asked if the Croatian football fandom, particularly the fan groups Torcida and the BBB, developed as the main opposition to HNS in recent years, responded affirmatively. Petranović elaborated that the Croatian fans are not only the main opposition, but the only opposition,¹⁵⁹ whereas Perasović feels that fandom is the only constant, stubborn and resolute force that points out the corruption in football.¹⁶⁰ Mustapić believes that the perception of the fandom as the only real opposition to the corruption in Croatian football is justified. He elaborates that there isn't anyone that continually does what Croatian football fandom do, and that in the last 20 years the fan groups became well-organized civil society associations where they developed certain abilities and directed their activities for a fight for the public good.¹⁶¹

The optimistic view of Mustapić is contrasted by the views of both Jurišić and Holiga, who see the situation of the fans as the main opposition as a paradox and as a sign of weakness of Croatia as a country. Jurišić mentions explicitly that “in Croatia a paradox is happening in which the fans force the state to abide to its laws, something that does not exist anywhere else in the world, as the fans are everywhere labeled as the ones that operate outside the law,”¹⁶² whereas Holiga notes that there is a “bizarre situation in which the fans made some progressive steps and that it is expected from them to be some sort of a progressive element in the society, but the fans are not that in their *habitus*.”¹⁶³

Consequently, the Croatian football fandom positioned itself as a main opposition and started using various methods to voice their discontent with the current state of Croatian football. In their contention with HNS, Croatian football fandom develops various repertoires

¹⁵⁹ Damir Petranović, Interview with the author.

¹⁶⁰ Benjamin Perasović, Interview with the author.

¹⁶¹ Marko Mustapić, Interview with the author.

¹⁶² Bernard Jurišić, Interview with the author.

¹⁶³ Aleksandar Holiga, Interview with the author.

of contention through which this contention is articulated. However, the repertoires that are being used by the fandom can be distinguished into three separated types of contention, that of conventional, confrontational and violent contention. Tarrow and Tilly note that “all forms of contention rest on performances, but performances range from direct assaults on others to theatricals staged for nearby or distant audiences.”¹⁶⁴ Conventional contention is understood by both Tarrow and Tilly as a type of contention with modular performances meaning that they have the possibility to be adapted and used in a variety of local and social circumstances by a wide-range of participants and audiences.¹⁶⁵ Some of conventional means of contention include protests, online calls for action or petitions. Confrontational and violent contention are understood by the same authors as the type of contentious performances that cannot be seen as orderly, theatrical or peaceful.¹⁶⁶

Croatian football fandom uses all three types of contention, but in order to develop a more nuanced research and to adhere to the limitations of the thesis, I decided to research separately first the conventional means of contention and then confrontational and violent contention in a separate subchapter. I merged confrontational and violent contention under one subgroup entitled unconventional means of contention, mainly because those two types of contention occur less frequent than conventional contention, but are an essential feature of fandom’s movement.

5.3. Conventional means of contention

5.3.1. Petitions, public protests, boycotts and acts of solidarity

Croatian football fandom in their sustained contention with HNS uses various established repertoires, notably petitions, protests, boycotts and acts of solidarity. Due to the

¹⁶⁴ Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 16.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

limitations, only the most important repertoires will be covered in the thesis. Petitions figured from the start as a method of the fandom for voicing their discontent with HNS and its *de facto* leader Mamić. Already in 2009, the BBB gathered 18,000 signatures that demanded that Mamić resigns from Dinamo.¹⁶⁷ The BBB followed up that petition with another one in 2014, for which they gathered 48,798 signatures.¹⁶⁸ Whereas the BBB's petitions were directed against a single individual, Torcida's petition was directed against HNS. In 2017, Torcida in coordination with German branches of Society of Hajduk's friends, started online petition in which they demanded an urgent reaction from the Croatian government towards respecting the 'Law on Sports', and an irrevocable resignation of the leading structures of HNS.¹⁶⁹ Unfortunately, the fandom's petitions weren't successful as the authorities ignored the demands from the public.

Another important repertoire of Croatian football fandom in their contention with HNS are public protests organized by the fans. In the period between 2010 to 2017, Croatian football fandom was involved in various public protests against HNS. Due to the limited scope of the research it is impossible to analyze all the protests, so my focus is directed to the biggest protest in that period, the protest organized by Torcida in Split in 2014. The protest occurred on the 29th of November 2014 and it was organized as an opposition to the hegemony of HNS and the unequal treatment of Hajduk by the football authorities. On the protest, which quickly became

¹⁶⁷ Mladen Bariša, "Bandiću 18 Tisuća Potpisa Protiv Mamića [Bandić Receives 18000 Signatures against Mamić]," *Slobodna Dalmacija*, March 23, 2009, <http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/sport/domaci-nogomet/clanak/id/45464/bbb-ovci-urucili-bandicu-18-tisuca-potpisa-protiv-mamica-uvijek-rjeciti-gradonacelnik-bez-komentara-video>.

¹⁶⁸ Ivan Mušlek, "Zajedno Za Dinamo - Dugogodišnja Borba Protiv Moćnika Koji Zaobilaze Zakone [Together for Dinamo - Lasting Struggle against Powerful Opponents Who Circumvent the Laws]," *Nogomet Plus*, August 11, 2015, <http://www.nogometplus.net/index.php/naslovna/zajedno-za-dinamo-dugogodisnja-borba-protiv-mocnika-koji-zaobilaze-zakone/>.

¹⁶⁹ Tino Roso, "Peticija: Tražimo Provedbu Zakona O Sportu I Smjenu Vodstva HNS-a [Petition: We Demand Implementation of 'Law on Sports' and Resignation of the Leadership of HNS]," *Nogomet Plus*, February 27, 2017, <http://www.nogometplus.net/index.php/navijaci/peticija-trazimo-provedbu-zakona-sportu-smjenu-vodstva-hns-a/>.

a mass protest as it was attended by more than 30,000 people, Torcida formulated their claims against HNS. Torcida notably demanded that the leading members of the HNS have to resign as they alienated the fans from the game, whom they treat as second-class citizens and that the state institutions should be more involved in battling corruption in Croatian football.¹⁷⁰

The significance of the event was twofold, not only was it a clear expression of discontent by the fandom, but the protest grew out of the fan group core to become a wide-ranging organized protest that included people from different backgrounds, giving the event an added social importance. This extended social importance was voiced by sociologist Perasović, one of the main speakers on the protest, who pointed out that “in Split more than 30,000 people showed up on the protest against HNS and against corruption in Croatian football, and we cannot say that all of this 30,000 people were members of the ultras subculture [members of Torcida].”¹⁷¹ Another speaker at the protest, Bojan Islamović attributes the mass public attendance on the protest to Torcida’s popularity as the group “worked on becoming more approachable by the public, so that people would understand that they have a humanitarian part, that they are not just hooligans.”¹⁷² Subsequently, the Split protest was a first indication that the anti-corruption activities of the fans extended beyond the fan core and became more socially inclusive.

Boycotts and acts of solidarity are other repertoires used by the fandom in their contention with HNS. Boycotts were used by both Torcida and the BBB. The latter are known for their boycotts against Mamić, were the fan group would boycott attending home and away

¹⁷⁰ Slobodna Dalmacija, “Torcidini Zahtjevi: ‘Tražimo Ostavke Čelnih Ljudi HNS-A, Prije Svih Šukera I Šuprahe’ [Tordica’s Demands: ‘We Demand Resignations from Leading People of HNS, Foremost from Šuker and Šupraha’],” *Sportske Novosti*, November 26, 2014, <http://sportske.jutarnji.hr/nogomet/hnl/torcidini-zahtjevi-trazimo-ostavke-celnih-ljudi-hns-a-prije-svih-sukera-i-suprahe/4216368/>.

¹⁷¹ Benjamin Perasović, Interview with the author.

¹⁷² Bojan Islamović, Interview with the author.

matches of their team to show their discontent about the situation in Croatian football.¹⁷³ Other notable examples of boycotts in the period from 2010 to 2017, includes the 2012 boycott of the match between Croatia and Switzerland in Split, where Perasović notes that the boycott was led by Torcida and conducted without any kind of preparations,¹⁷⁴ and the 2015 boycott of the home game between Croatia and Bulgaria.¹⁷⁵

The most important act of solidarity by the fandom occurred in 2013, when Torcida and the BBB joined forces in their activities against HNS. The decision to join forces was provoked by HNS' decision to introduce "vouchers" for visiting fans, who in order to buy a ticket for an away game would need to leave their personal information to their club, and the club would have the right to decide which fans would be allocated the vouchers to attend the games. HNS defended this controversial policy as a measure to combat hooliganism, but Petranović argues that HNS' explanation lacks credibility as individuals that have some criminal offences related to hooliganism have a banning order on entering football stadiums, where the main idea of the policy was an attempt by HNS to extinguish any kind of resistance of Croatian football fandom to HNS, by prohibiting them entrance to the stadium,¹⁷⁶ the main place of their contention against HNS.

Torcida and the BBB managed to circumvent this law by Torcida buying the tickets for the BBB and vice versa, which led to a situation that the biggest rivals were actively cooperating

¹⁷³ Mladen Miletić, "BBB Pozvali Na Bojkot Utakmica Do Sloma Maksimirskog Vladara [BBB Called for Boycotting Matches until the Defeat of the Maksimir Ruler]," *Večernji List*, August 11, 2010, <https://www.vecernji.hr/sport/bbb-pozvali-na-bojkot-utakmica-do-sloma-maksimirskog-vladara-177954>.

¹⁷⁴ Benjamin Perasović, Interview with the author.

¹⁷⁵ Index.hr, "Pogledajte Kako Je Hrvatska Bojkotom Podržala Svoju Reprezentaciju [Look How Croatia through Boycott Supported Its National Team]," *Index.hr*, October 10, 2015, <http://www.index.hr/sport/clanak/permalink/847276.aspx>.

¹⁷⁶ Damir Petranović, "Torcida I BBB Rame Uz Rame Protiv HNS-a! [Torcida and the BBB Shoulder to Shoulder against HNS!]," *Tportal.hr*, October 25, 2013, <https://www.tportal.hr/sport/clanak/torcida-i-bbb-rame-uz-rame-protiv-hns-a-20131018>.

and cheering on the same stances next to each other without any problems. It is important to note that the BBB and Torcida were also using this time of cooperation for expressing their discontent with HNS, thereby making HNS' policy counterproductive as the resistance against HNS only increased. Perasović gives a firsthand account of the solidarity: "We had six months of total armistice, where the fans would buy tickets for each other, Torcida for BBB and, BBB for Torcida, where the fan groups guaranteed safety for one another."¹⁷⁷ This particular case of solidarity indicates a high level of organization and cooperation amongst the fans in their battle against HNS. Also, the widespread cooperation was successful as HNS early in 2014 decided to drop the policy of vouchers. However, this was not the only case of high-level of organization by the fandom, as both fan clubs decided to oppose HNS through special associations and legal channels which lead to the development of two important citizen initiatives Together for Dinamo and Our Hajduk.

5.3.2. Citizen initiatives: Together for Dinamo and Our Hajduk

A crucial element in Croatian football fandom's struggle with HNS was the organization of special associations who would through institutional actions oppose HNS. The inception of special associations arose also due to the need to put the cause of the fandom into the public discourse, predominately to attract as many as possible participants outside football's circles to make the cause significantly stronger. In the beginning of this decade, the BBB and Torcida founded two citizen initiatives to combat issues within Croatian football. The BBB founded the citizenship initiative Together for Dinamo (ZZD), whereas Torcida founded Our Hajduk (NH). Those initiatives first fought for more transparency in their respective clubs, but later expanded their activities beyond their initial efforts, particularly Our Hajduk, who became a vital

¹⁷⁷ Benjamin Perasović, Interview with the author.

participant in the changing of the 'Law on Sports.' Both initiatives are also clear indicators that Croatian football fandom developed as a notable social actor in Croatia.

Together for Dinamo¹⁷⁸ was founded in 2010 by members and former members of the BBB, but as Hodges and Stubbs observe “the decision was made to detach itself from BBB, making its own separate decisions in order to attract a much wider base of supporters.”¹⁷⁹ Through expanding the membership in the initiative, ZZD was looking to make a direct impact on Croatian football, by being aware that changes could only be made if they would have a large support for their actions. The initiative has an official Facebook group that currently counts over 19,000 followers.¹⁸⁰ As Hodges and Stubbs note the initiative developed various political and non-political goals, which includes amongst others transparency and legal work of management bodies connected with Dinamo, expert and competent leadership, promotion of positive values, fight against violence at football matches and education of young supporters.¹⁸¹ However, ZZD was also active in organizing petitions against Mamić and expressed a willingness to engage with the Croatian government in order to change the Constitution to enable improvements in football.¹⁸² ZZD was notably engaged in many social spheres, thereby pointing to high-level of the initiative that arose from more narrow fan circles.

ZZD was from the start involved in battling irregularities in Croatian football through legal and institutional means. Over the course of five years (2010-15) ZZD requested and filed

¹⁷⁸ Together for Dinamo (Zajedno za Dinamo) will be from here on referred through its acronym ZZD.

¹⁷⁹ Hodges and Stubbs, “The Paradoxes of Politicisation: Fan Initiatives in Zagreb, Croatia,” 61.

¹⁸⁰ The initiative's website: <https://www.facebook.com/Zajedno-Za-Dinamo-152476774785393/>

¹⁸¹ Hodges and Stubbs, “The Paradoxes of Politicisation: Fan Initiatives in Zagreb, Croatia,” 61.

¹⁸² Ibid., 61–62; Mušlek, “Zajedno Za Dinamo - Dugogodišnja Borba Protiv Moćnika Koji Zaobilaze Zakone [Together for Dinamo - Lasting Struggle against Powerful Opponents Who Circumvent the Laws].”

several official complaints to the Ministry of Science and Education (in charge on sport-related issues) and to the City Council of Zagreb about violations of Dinamo and HNS, specifically violations of the ‘Law on Civil Organizations’ and the ‘Law on Sports.’¹⁸³ Unfortunately, those institutional actions were ignored by the authorities. In 2014 ZZD achieved a short-term success, when responding to one of ZZD numerous complaints, Sports Inspection of Ministry of Science and Education declared that Dinamo’s statute as a civil organization does not ensure equal right to be elected and to be informed about the business dealings of the club, where the inspection demanded reconfiguration of the statue that would inevitably mean elections and certain threat to Mamić’s hegemony.¹⁸⁴ Unfortunately, the decision of the Sports Inspection was quickly rescinded by the ‘Control Office of the City Council of Zagreb,’¹⁸⁵ leading to a unusual development of events, where it wasn’t clear, if the city of Zagreb or Ministry of Science and Education had the right to decide on the matter. However, the case was a good example how the fans through a citizen initiative attempted to bring about changes not only in football, but generally in Croatian society.

Almost simultaneously to ZZD, another citizen initiative developed in Split called Our Hajduk.¹⁸⁶ Founded in July 2011, the initiative to date counts 26,533 members.¹⁸⁷ Torcida had a crucial role in the foundation of NH, where Petranović stresses that formal founders of Our Hajduk was Torcida.¹⁸⁸ Unlike ZZD, NH decided to retain its close affiliation with Torcida.

¹⁸³ Mušlek, “Zajedno Za Dinamo - Dugogodišnja Borba Protiv Moćnika Koji Zaobilaze Zakone [Together for Dinamo - Lasting Struggle against Powerful Opponents Who Circumvent the Laws].”

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Dea Redžić, “Gradonačelnice Bandiću, Štitite Li vi to Mamićev Obiteljski Biznis? [Mayor Bandić, Are You Protecting Mamić’s Family Business?],” *Index.hr*, April 15, 2014, <http://www.index.hr/sport/clanak/gradonacelnice-bandicu-stitite-li-vi-to-mamicev-obiteljski-biznis-/740032.aspx>.

¹⁸⁶ Our Hajduk will be from here on referred through its acronym NH.

¹⁸⁷ Naš Hajduk, “Naš Hajduk [Our Hajduk],” *Naš Hajduk*, May 21, 2017, <http://www.nashajduk.hr/>.

¹⁸⁸ Damir Petranović, Interview with the author.

This was pointed out by Islamović, first secretary of NH and one of its founders, who said that Torcida is always a part of NH, first president [of NH] was the president of Torcida, current president [of NH] is a former secretary of Torcida, there always exists this link.¹⁸⁹ Subsequently, the initiative formed a high-level of organization and hierarchy, which includes a wide variety of people, not only members of Torcida, but also regular citizens, some of whom are university professors, businessmen or lawyers. This points to the fact that NH from the start of its activities had a wide support from the public.

The initial goals of NH were directed towards more transparency within Hajduk and in the future acquiring shares of the club to guarantee that transparency, but also to safeguard it from political influence. The aims were completed in 2016, when NH bought 25% of shares of Hajduk,¹⁹⁰ a significant development in Croatian football when fans became partial owners of a football club. However, safeguarding Hajduk was not the only activity NH was interested, the other being a more just and transparent Croatian football, which brought them in conflict with HNS. Bernard Jurišić pointed out that the clash between NH and HNS was inevitably at some point: “It was clear that NH would sooner or later start fighting not only for Hajduk, but also for Croatian football, for setting different conditions in Croatian football, for more democracy and transparency and for abiding the laws.”¹⁹¹

NH had over the years several disputes with HNS, and the initiative was involved in the famous anti-HNS protest in Split in 2014. The biggest contribution of NH in their contention with HNS, was their involvement in amending the ‘Law on Sports,’ which at the same time

¹⁸⁹ Bojan Islamović, Interview with the author.

¹⁹⁰ Ozren Maršić, “Naš Hajduk Postao Vlasnikom 25 Posto Dionica. Mamić: Sve Je Krenulo Od Očeve Ideje... [Our Hajduk Became Owner of 25 Percent of Shares. Mamić: It All Started from My Father’s Idea...],” *Večernji List*, October 16, 2016, <https://www.vecernji.hr/sport/svecanost-na-pjaci-nas-hajduk-postao-vlasnikom-25-posto-dionica-bijelih-1121460>.

¹⁹¹ Bernard Jurišić, Interview with the author.

signaled how Croatian football fandom transcended their sport-related activities, by expanding their activities on a political level. NH's involvement in amending the 'Law on Sports' should be considered as an institutional, organizational and political highpoint of Croatian football fandom's activities against HNS, and another indication that Croatian football fandom managed to mobilize a wide-array of participants, thus making a case for arguing that the fandom developed as a social movement.

The amendments on the 'Law on Sports' that was initiated by NH started after the mass Torcida and NH led protest in Split in 2014, where the crowd of over 30,000 people demanded changes in Croatian football. Islamović, who at the time was the secretary of Our Hajduk and involved in creation of the latest version of the law, recounts the development of the events:

Week after [the Split protest] we [NH] received a call for a meeting with two ministers Bauk and Mornar, from Ministry of Public Administration and from Ministry of Science and Education... After that Hajduk called upon all lawyers, all people involved in sports in the city of Split, Our Hajduk was of course involved as well and Torcida, and the decision was reached that it is best to amend the current 'Law on Sports' in order to solve the problem [irregularities in Croatian football].¹⁹²

The new amendments on the 'Law on Sports' proposed by NH would have a significant impact on Croatian football, as it would directly tackle issues of corruption and illegalities. Petranović observes that one of the key amendments of the new version of the law was the introduction of a rule that prohibits involvement in sports for people who were convicted for criminal offences in sport, but also the legal obligation to publish detailed financial reports.¹⁹³ Both amendments go against the interest of HNS as many of the current board members were involved in criminal activities like corruption or tax evasion. As such, the new law would inevitably provoke tectonic changes in HNS, something the Croatian football fandom was fighting for a decade. After

¹⁹² Bojan Islamović, Interview with the author.

¹⁹³ Damir Petranović, Interview with the author.

settling on how the draft of the new ‘Law on Sports’ should look like, NH continued to push for its implementation in Croatian parliament, and the new amendments of the ‘Law on Sports’ became official in July 2015, and the proposed changes of Our Hajduk were added within the existing law under the articles 13, 46, 47 and 74.¹⁹⁴ With the implementation of the amendments by the Government, Croatian football fandom achieved its biggest success against HNS.

However, the implementation of the amendments was also significant because it is an example on how Croatian football fandom can through special associations and with the help of the public, professionals and lawyers legally articulate its claims against HNS. To be precise the changes in the ‘Law on Sports’ is a clear example of a bottom-up approach undertaken by the fans to content with HNS within a legal and institutional framework. This notion was also voiced by Petranović and Jurišić. On the law, Jurišić said that “this is the first law after 20 years that was proposed in the Parliament that did not come from some political party or a political option and that it went through.”¹⁹⁵ A similar argument was voiced by Petranović, who said the following: “NH participated directly in the making of the new version of the law, and this is the only law in Croatian history where its initiative for drafting did not come from political structures, but outside of them, where the public set-up and ‘wrote’ the law and forced the politicians to adopt it.”¹⁹⁶ Consequently, with the adoption of the new version of the law, Croatian football fandom indirectly became an important social and political actor who can bring out some degree of changes in Croatia, thus making the movement of Croatian football fandom a highly organized movement.

¹⁹⁴ Hrvatski Sabor, “Zakon O Izmjenama I Dopunama Zakona O Sportu [The Law on the Changes and Amendments on the Law on Sports]” (Narodne Novine, July 20, 2015), http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2015_08_85_1650.html.

¹⁹⁵ Bernard Jurišić, Interview with the author.

¹⁹⁶ Damir Petranović, Interview with the author.

5.4. Unconventional means of contention

Croatian football fandom in their contention with HNS uses also unconventional means of contention, which are often confrontational and disorderly. This points to the fact that the fandom as a movement against HNS is quite heterogeneous with different groups or fractions having different ideas on how to contend with HNS. This subchapter will explore how hooliganism, violence and nationalism are being used as means of contention against HNS. Particular emphasis will be given to the instrumentalization of nationalist symbols by the fandom, which achieved its peak at the Poljud incident in 2015. Also, the thesis will aim to confirm that these methods were intentionally used by Croatian football fandom against HNS, as a last resort when the usual means of contention failed.

Through the data gathered from the interviewees, I argue that the displays of extreme nationalism by the fandom in Milano and Split, are not a case of the fandom being political extremists, but an intention of the fandom to purposely use hooliganism, nationalism and violence to provoke changes in HNS. The subchapter will examine those unconventional repertoires of contention through two notorious hooligan incidents in Milano and Split. Both incidents were characterized by expressions of radical nationalism, hooliganism or violence. After analyzing those incidents, the thesis will implement value expectancy theory to form a proper understanding as to why such unusual repertoires of contention occur.

5.4.1. Hooliganism, nationalism and the instrumentalization of nationalist symbols

Croatian football fandom has been involved in numerous incidents in the current decade, which varied in intensity from smaller misdemeanors to more serious offences such as violence against other fans, fighting the police or displaying forbidden insignia. Due to the limitations of the thesis, it is impossible to analyze all the incidents that occurred in the current decade, and as such my focus will be dedicated to two notable hooligan incidents in the current decade, the

incidents in Milano and Split. The decision to analyze those two incidents was influenced by notable domestic and foreign media coverage that the incidents caused, but also those two incidents featured expressions of extreme nationalism, violence and hooliganism. As Brentin observes, those two incidents were basically three different incidents of the same political protest,¹⁹⁷ the third being the incident in Saint Etienne (which is outside of the scope of this research) meaning that the incidents were used as a sign of protest by the fandom against HNS.

It has to be noted that the fandom has shown an affiliation towards right-wing politics in the past (explored in chapter four), and Jurišić mentions that fan groups in Croatia do have an ideological affiliation, as most of them are orientated towards the right, but this isn't their only reason for activity... they do not operate only on a nationalist and far-right basis, although they adapt 'so to speak' some far-right extremism as a tool for their struggle [against HNS].¹⁹⁸ Also, while talking specifically about Torcida, Petranović touches upon the political stances of the fan group by saying that Torcida is quite a heterogeneous group, irrespective of the sporadic incidents on the stadiums that create an impression in the public that Torcida is far-right, but in Torcida, and especially in Our Hajduk, between the fans of Hajduk you have people with different ideological preferences.¹⁹⁹ With that in mind, the thesis is aware about the possibility of displays of nationalist symbols by the fandom in a variety of incidents being an example of their ideology. However, the thesis argues that the cases in Milano and Split were examples of instrumentalization of nationalist symbols by the fandom, as the context of the events led up to the development of such unconventional repertoires.

The incident in Milano occurred in 2014, where Croatian football fandom was involved in a variety of hooligan acts from throwing flares, fighting the police to displays of radical

¹⁹⁷ Dario Brentin, Interview with the author.

¹⁹⁸ Bernard Jurišić, Interview with the author.

¹⁹⁹ Damir Petranović, Interview with the author.

nationalism. Notably, the fans displayed Croatian banners stylized with the letter ‘U’, a reference to the symbol of the *Ustaši* regime, which was then followed by chants ‘For Homeland Ready’ and ‘Let’s go *Ustaše*’, both greetings used by the Nazi-puppet regime in Croatia during the WWII.²⁰⁰ In the aftermath of the incident, HNS was fined by FIFA for the behavior of Croatian fans, as FIFA ordered the federation to pay 80,000 euros for the fine, including a partial closure of the stands for the next home game.²⁰¹ This was not a first fine HNS received for the display of nationalism by the fandom. During the period from 2012 to 2013 HNS was fined by FIFA for the chants ‘For Homeland Ready’ first with 35,000 Swiss Francs and then with 50,000 Swiss Francs,²⁰² with the fines raising each time substantially.

FIFA and UEFA regarded Croatian fans as repeated offenders and every other subsequent incident relating to nationalism would face an even harsher fine for HNS, even possible expulsion from FIFA and UEFA organized competitions. Consequently, the instrumentalization of nationalist symbols became a potent tool for compromising HNS on an international scene, the only field where HNS could really feel the damage. On a domestic level, HNS was safeguarded by an ineffective institutional framework, where conventional means of contention used by the fandom in the past were largely inefficient, despite the fandom opting for a variety of conventional means of contention.

²⁰⁰ Aleksandar Holiga, “Croatia Fans’ Act of Terrorism in Italy Was a Planned Cry for Attention,” *The Guardian*, November 17, 2014, sec. Football, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2014/nov/17/croatia-fans-terrorism-italy-planned-cry-attention>.

²⁰¹ PolitikaPlus, “Zbog Divljanja U Milanu HNS Mora Platiti 80.000 Eura I Zatvoriti Dio Tribine Na Idućoj Utakmici [Because of Riots in Milan, HNS Needs to Pay 80000 Euros and Close a Part of Stands for next Match],” *Politikaplus.com*, December 12, 2014, <http://www.politikaplus.com/novost/114498zbog-divljanja-u-milanu-hns-mora-platiti-80.000-eura-i-zatvoriti-dio-tribine-na-iducjoj-utakmici>.

²⁰² Tomo Ničota, “Šimuniću Se Loše Piše: Fifa Je Već Kažnjavala HNS Zbog Pokliča ‘Za Dom Spremni’! [It Does Not Look Good for Šimunić: FIFA Had Already Fined HNS before for the Chant ‘For Homeland Ready’!],” *Sportske Novosti*, November 23, 2013, <http://sportske.jutarnji.hr/nogomet/hnl/simunicu-se-lose-pise-fifa-je-vec-kaznjavala-hns-zbog-poklica-za-dom-spremni%E2%80%99/4251615/>.

The Milano incident was only a prelude to another incident that happened in Split in June 2015, during a game between Croatia and Italy. The incident came to be known notoriously as the “Poljud Swastika.” In brief, prior to the match, several unidentified perpetrators broke into Poljud stadium and engraved on the football pitch a swastika, which the organizers of the match failed to identify before the kick-off, thus the match was played with a swastika on the field. To make the incident more bizarre the game was played without spectators due to the ban that HNS received for the behavior of the fans prior to the game in Split, which in turn means that the perpetrators had to plan the incident beforehand as nobody could access the stadium during the game day. UEFA did not take the incident lightly as it fined HNS with 100,000 euros, deduction of one point in the qualifying group and with an additional ban of the Croatian national team playing their next two home games in UEFA competitions behind closed doors.²⁰³ In the aftermath of the incident both the Croatian government, as well as the President condemned the incident, where President of Croatia Grabar Kitarović accused the hooligans for the incident, as they intended not only to defame Croatian football, but also Croatia as a country, demanding immediate investigation to find the responsible ones.²⁰⁴ However, to this date the perpetrators have not been found, leaving the incident to be still unresolved.

The incident in Milano looks like a case of what Billig terms as banal nationalism, whereas the second incident looks like a case of extreme nationalism, or in Billig’s words hot nationalism. Billig describes banal nationalism as ideological habits that are not removed from everyday life, where daily, the nation is indicated, or ‘flagged’, in the lives of its citizenry.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Ben Rumsby, “Croatia Fined and Deducted Point for Swastika on Pitch in Euro 2016 Qualifier against Italy,” July 23, 2015, sec. Sport, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/euro-2016/11759063/Croatia-fined-and-deducted-point-for-swastika-on-pitch-in-Euro-2016-qualifier-against-Italy.html>.

²⁰⁴ Marko Pavić and Mia Buva, “Grabar-Kitarović: Neprijatelji Hrvatske, Odgovarat Ćete Za Ovo I Za Svastiku! [Grabar-Kitarović: Enemies of Croatia, You Will Be Held Responsible for This and for the Swastika!],” *Večernji List*, June 17, 2016, <http://www.vecernji.hr/euro-2016-navijaci/grabar-kitarovic-neprijatelji-hrvatske-odgovarat-cete-za-ovo-i-za-svastiku-1093094>.

²⁰⁵ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 6.

On the other hand, hot nationalism is seen by Billig as outbreaks of ‘hot’ nationalist passions, that develop in periods of disruption and are often reflected in extreme social movements.²⁰⁶ However, both incidents should not be considered as cases of banal and hot nationalism. The Milano incident which included a clear display of *Ustaši* symbols should not be considered as an act of promoting *Ustaši* regime as a part of Croatian national identity, nor should it be understood as a statement by the fans that the puppet-state Independent State of Croatia should be considered as a predecessor of the present-day Croatia. The incident has to be put into context of the struggle between Croatian football fandom and HNS. Prior to the incident, the fandom tried to indicate domestically through several institutional methods the HNS’ enabled corruption in Croatian football. However, since conventional means failed to achieve their necessary aim, a part of the fandom switched to more confrontational methods of contention.

Holiga, who covered in detail the incident in Milano, confirms this stance by arguing that the incident “was not just a random outpouring of mindless violence by thugs whose only goal was to create disorder. It was a statement; a planned, desperate cry for attention. The logic behind it was to send a message to the Croatian Football Federation that it cannot just do whatever it wants and expect to get away with it.”²⁰⁷ This was also voiced by Brentin who stressed that the incident in Milano “was not as random as media outlets portrayed it, but rather a ‘desperate’ attempt to send Croatian football governing bodies a clear message of protest, and even more importantly, to try and create international awareness of the problems that have taken over Croatian (domestic) football.”²⁰⁸ It has to be pointed out that leading football governing bodies FIFA, and especially UEFA in cooperation with FARE network (Football against

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 44.

²⁰⁷ Holiga, “Croatia Fans’ Act of Terrorism in Italy Was a Planned Cry for Attention.”

²⁰⁸ Dario Brentin, “The Democratic ‘Hooligan’? Radical Democracy and Social Protest Amongst Football Fans in Croatia,” *Balkanist*, December 14, 2014, <http://balkanist.net/democratic-hooligan-radical-democracy-social-protest-amongst-football-fans-croatia/>.

Racism in Europe) led long campaigns against discrimination, racism and political propaganda, where national football federations and clubs would face severe fines, if their players or fans engaged in racism or discrimination.

According to UEFA's disciplinary regulations, Article 14 clearly states the following:

If one or more member association or club's supporter engage in discriminatory behavior that insults the dignity of a person or a group on grounds of skin color, race, religion or ethnic origin, the member association or the club will be punished with a minimum of a partial stadium closure and for repeated offences the association or club will be punished first with one match behind closed doors and a fine of 50,000 euros, and for subsequent offences with stadium closure, forfeiting the match, deduction of points and disqualification from the competition.²⁰⁹

Considering UEFA's heavy fines on acts of discrimination and racism, and the fact that Croatian football fandom exhausted institutional repertoires of contention, the fandom tried to articulate their claims through unconventional means, where displays of extreme nationalism, actively combated by UEFA and FIFA, would draw the biggest attention to the fandom's struggle with HNS. Also, it was guaranteed that both UEFA and FIFA, as well as FARE would react to the displays of forbidden insignia by the fandom and thereby starting to question why did Croatian fans decide to engage in such a radical behavior that directly goes against their own national team's interests.

Sociologist Benjamin Perasović gives a detailed look on the incident and explains the reasoning of the fans behind it:

In Milano, the Croatian fans attempted to do what they also did later in Saint Etienne, which was an attempt to disband the game by throwing flares [on to the pitch]. This was done purely for the world to see, hear and question why would Croatian fans attempt to disband the game of their own national team. The sheer fact that this people [football fans] are patriots, makes this issue even bigger and

²⁰⁹ UEFA - Union of European Football Associations, "UEFA Disciplinary Regulations Edition 2016" (UEFA, 2016), 13, http://www.uefa.org/MultimediaFiles/Download/Regulations/uefaorg/UEFACompDisCases/02/37/00/86/2370086_DOWNLOAD.pdf.

harder. It is not easy for a young man who is a patriot, who likes national symbols, who likes to see Croatian flag on the podium or hear the national anthem, when such a person attempts to disband a game of his national team, this means that he has been put into a desperate situation in which he has no choice, but only a handful of radical means left to draw attention [on the problems].²¹⁰

Consequently, the incident in Milano was an unconventional and desperate mean of collective action by the fandom, after petitions, public protests or boycotts failed domestically.

The more bizarre and far more notorious incident in Split that included the swastika, despite looking like an example of extreme nationalism is actually a case of instrumentalization of nationalist symbols. Perasović elaborates this by pointing out that the “examples of flares in Milano, example of swastika [in Poljud], examples of flares in Saint Etienne are solely one of the same example, that is examples of the struggle by the fan movement in Croatia against the corrupted HNS.”²¹¹ The Poljud swastika, just like the Milano incident has to be put into context of the contention between the fandom and HNS. The incident was preceded by two notable events. One was the mass protest organized by Torcida and Our Hajduk in November 2014 in Split, where the organizers demanded more transparency in Croatian football, as well as fairer treatment of Hajduk. Torcida and NH felt that HNS is offering more favorable treatment to Dinamo. In that period, the amendments on the ‘Law on Sports’ created by NH were still not implemented, leading to the situation that HNS was again untouched, and that the mass protest in Split did not have any effect in changing the situation in Croatian football.

The second event prior to the Split incident was the peculiar circumstances surrounding the decision of HNS to change the venue of the match from Zagreb to Split. The national team did not play for years a game considered of high importance in Split, where HNS opted to play in Zagreb instead. In the period between 2010 – 2015, the national team played in Zagreb 15

²¹⁰ Benjamin Perasović, Interview with the author.

²¹¹ Benjamin Perasović, Interview with the author.

times compared only to three times in Split,²¹² which caused a considerable resentment from Split fans against HNS as the organizer of the matches. Petranović touches upon this by arguing that “the national team was not welcomed for a long time before [the match against Italy] in Split, it was simply known that the national team was instrumentalized by Mamić... it was visible that Split as the biggest footballing region in Croatia was ignored [by HNS], ignored for 20 years.”²¹³ Even the coach of Hajduk, Poklepović touched upon the issue of the national team not playing at Poljud by arguing that the national team has an obligation to play their games at Poljud, because Split is a sports city that has both the perfect stadium and the crowd like no other for such games of the national team.²¹⁴ This tense situation between Split fans and HNS was further increased when HNS decided to switch the venue of the game between Croatia and Italy from Zagreb to Split, and only a few days after the decision, UEFA issued a ban that the game was to be played without spectators, thereby making HNS’ gesture of giving the game to Split a hollow one, and further increasing the already tense relations between Split fans and HNS.

The interviewees noted that the switch of the venue was influenced by a political decision, where Islamović noted that HNS under pressure from HDZ decided to switch the venue,²¹⁵ whereas Petranović stresses that the venue was switched under dubious circumstances through the political intervention of Tomislav Karamarko at the time the president of HDZ.²¹⁶ Consequently, in the buildup to the game there was considerable tension between Split and HNS, but due to the limited scope, the thesis does not go into further detail behind the political

²¹² Croatian Football Federation, “Statistics - Croatian Football Federation,” *Croatian Football Federation*, June 3, 2017, <http://hns-cff.hr/en/info/statistics/?cid=FC%20A&pg=2>.

²¹³ Damir Petranović, Interview with the author.

²¹⁴ Net.hr, “Gola Istina, ‘Hrvatskoj Reprezentaciji Je I Obveza Igrati Na Poljudu!’ [The Naked Truth, ‘Croatian National Team Has an Obligation to Play on Poljud!’],” *Net.hr*, April 7, 2015, <http://net.hr/sport/nogomet/poklepovic-hrvatskoj-reprezentaciji-je-obveza-igrati-i-na-poljudu/>.

²¹⁵ Bojan Islamović, Interview with the author.

²¹⁶ Damir Petranović, Interview with the author.

reasons of the game switch nor if HNS knew about the incoming ban from UEFA and decide not to disclose it. The thesis analyzed the run-up to the game to point out the already existing tensions between football fans in Split and HNS, which was further increased with the spectator ban issued by UEFA, where even the mayor of Split in protest to HNS decided not to attend the game.²¹⁷

That the Poljud swastika should be considered as a planned and purposive incident and a case of instrumentalization of nationalist symbols was confirmed by interviewees during the fieldwork for the thesis. On a direct question, if the Poljud swastika was a planned incident intended to harm and internationally embarrass HNS, all the interviewees responded positively. Petranović points out that the incident was a diversion and that it did not have anything to do with Nazism,²¹⁸ which was also voiced by Jurišić, who sees the incident as planned, but also as an act of diverting the public attention and international attention on the problems in Croatian football.²¹⁹ Mustapić considers the incident as a guerrilla action,²²⁰ whereas Perasović sums the incident through a sociological perspective by saying the following: “Knowing social movements, knowing ultras subculture and knowing people who went to Milano and Saint Etienne, I can conclude that the swastika was used as another tool in the fight against a far superior opponent, that is HNS.”²²¹ With that in mind, the incident should be seen within context of the contention between Croatian football fandom and HNS, and not as an isolated incident perpetrated by fans with radical, even neo-Nazi orientation.

²¹⁷ Hrt.hr, “HNS Pogazio Obećanje O Navijačkim Zonama U Splitu [HNS Did Not Maintain Its Promise about Fan Zones in Split],” *Hrt - Croatian Radio Television*, accessed June 3, 2017, <http://sport.hrt.hr/288126/hns-pogazio-obecanje-o-navijackim-zonama-u-splitu>.

²¹⁸ Damir Petranović, Interview with the author.

²¹⁹ Bernard Jurišić, Interview with the author.

²²⁰ Marko Mustapić, Interview with the author.

²²¹ Benjamin Perasović, Interview with the author.

Also, the interviewees when asked if the Poljud swastika is a case of instrumentalization of nationalist symbols in contention with HNS, all seven interviewees responded positively. Jurišić sees the Poljud incident as a method of extra institutional struggle, where the people involved in the struggle have to do, outside of institutional frameworks, something extreme, something that will draw attention of other people,²²² meaning that the swastika was the end result of this extreme act. Mustapić mentions that the perpetrators of the incident knew very well what will gather the biggest possible attention not only in Croatia, but on the level of Europe, and what can be manipulated for their aims, and swastika was undoubtedly that symbol.²²³ This was also voiced by Petranović who argues that the perpetrators of the incident were looking for a mean that would inflict the biggest possible damage to HNS, which they achieved as there was not a media outlet in the world who did not report on the swastika.²²⁴

Perasović notes that the swastika was a case on instrumentalization of nationalist symbols by adding: “I think that the best case [of instrumentalization] is the swastika in Split, despite the different affiliations that we can call today as right-wing, the swastika and Nazism as such represent a statistically small minority in Split, people who would support this are a minority, statistically insignificant, but the symbol was a tool in the struggle with HNS.”²²⁵ Consequently, one needs to consider the Poljud incident as an example of instrumentalization of nationalist symbols, and not a case of hot nationalism. The incident needs to be understood from the context of the decade long struggle between the fandom and HNS, when all institutional approaches by the fandom failed, which pushed a part of the football fandom to “act out” in unconventional manners to content with HNS, something that will be explored further through value expectancy theory.

²²² Bernard Jurišić, Interview with the author.

²²³ Marko Mustapić, Interview with the author.

²²⁴ Damir Petranović, Interview with the author.

²²⁵ Benjamin Perasović, Interview with the author.

5.4.2. Understanding the incidents: Value Expectancy Theory (VET)

In order to understand the incidents, but also the decision of the fandom to use unconventional means of contention like hooliganism, nationalism or violence, the thesis applies value expectancy theory (VET) used by Karl-Dieter Opp. The theory is explained in detail in the theoretical chapter of the thesis, but in brief, value expectancy theory assumes that individuals are considering certain behavioral alternatives in their actions, and are choosing those alternatives depending on the behavioral consequences of the alternatives.²²⁶ Opp continues that for each behavioral consequence there is an expected utility, valuation and probability, and certain consequences have higher values of the product of the utility than others, and are as such preferred by individuals.²²⁷ The greater the value of consequences are for a certain behavioral alternative, the higher is the net utility of the behavioral alternative, meaning the individuals will use the behavioral alternative with the highest net utility.²²⁸

When VET is applied to the case study of contemporary Croatian football fandom, one can note behavioral actions of the fandom that correspond to value expectancy theory. The fandom started their contention with HNS by using various conventional repertoires such as petitions, protest or boycotts, but they proved to be rather inefficient as methods to combat HNS and the corruption in football. It should be noted that the lack of political will by the Croatian political elites to combat corruption in football led to the development of a situation where the fandom was left without any significant institutional support in their contention with HNS, minimizing in the process for the fandom to combat corruption through institutional frameworks. Considering VET, the net utility of conventional repertoires of contention used by the fandom have proven to be insufficient.

²²⁶ Opp, *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements : A Multidisciplinary Introduction, Critique, and Synthesis*, 6.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

Subsequently, in a situation where the fans exhausted most conventional means of contention, and the ‘Law on Sports’ is still not implemented to its entire capacity,²²⁹ a part of the fandom turned to alternatives, that is to unconventional means of contention, particularly to hooliganism, nationalism or violence, perceiving those means as having the highest utility in contention with HNS. Parts of the fandom believed that those means would have direct, visible and lasting negative impact on HNS, or in other words having the biggest value to damage HNS. It was expected that HNS would be fined for the misbehavior of the fans by all relevant institutions, particularly if the fans used various illegal activities like hooliganism or displays of extreme nationalist symbols, as it was the case with Croatian football fandom. With the lack of available institutional means of contention, individuals within Croatian football fandom opted for behavioral alternatives that had the highest utility in their contention with HNS, which was seen through the instrumentalization of nationalist symbols and hooliganism.

The incidents in Milano and Split were a result of a part of the fandom opting for an alternative with highest possible utility in their contention with HNS, but at the same time looking for an alternative with highest possible consequences for HNS, which was regarded by the fandom as financial loss and international embarrassment for HNS. Already the Milano incident with significant display of national symbols made a notable financial loss and damage to HNS, but the Split incident with the swastika, multiplied this damage done in Milano. That the Split incident had the biggest possible damage to HNS was also mentioned by Petranović, who believes that if the perpetrators had drawn the letter ‘U’ (in reference to *Ustaši* regime) instead of swastika, the incident wouldn’t probably made as many headlines as it did with the swastika, as the perpetrators estimated that the swastika would make a more concrete damage

²²⁹ MOST Independent List, “Most Pozvao Na Provođenje Zakona O Sportu [Most Called for Implementation of Law on Sports],” *Most Independent List*, November 8, 2016, <https://most-nl.com/2016/11/08/most-pozvao-na-provodenje-zakona-o-sportu/>.

to HNS.²³⁰ This was also voiced by Holiga that the swastika would have, at least in the eyes of the culprits, the biggest damage to HNS. Holiga elaborates on this:

If somebody wanted to express their ideological convictions or to stress a political opinion, I doubt that certain someone would opt for a swastika. This was an example when someone wanted to make sure that the symbol that was drawn would be universally understood, that everyone will understand that this is something that should not have been done, something that does not have any possibility of relativisation.²³¹

In the aftermath of the incident, HNS was heavily fined, but also the contention between Croatian football fandom and HNS made the headlines, thus at least from the perspective of the fandom, the utility of those incidents made maximum damage to HNS through fines and international embarrassment.

It remains doubtful, if such unconventional means of contention used by the fans help their cause against HNS. Despite having some short-term effects on HNS through financial loss, international embarrassment or media close-up, in the long-term such unconventional means didn't really help the cause of the fans in their battle against HNS. With every incident that involves Croatian fans, Croatian football fandom as a whole is being labeled as hooligans or extremists by media or the authorities. When speaking about this kind of confrontational protest, Brentin said that "this kind of protest, that they [the fans] continued on... it just seems to me that it's shortsighted, that it doesn't go beyond the moment of the protest and assumes that changes will then be implemented."²³² Sociologist Mustapić while referring to the Split incident elaborates that despite fandom having a short-term moment to enjoy the fact that HNS was brutally fined, on the other hand, after the protests in Split that gathered around 30,000 people, various [hooligan] incidents happened, which weakened the fandom's movement.²³³

²³⁰ Damir Petranović, Interview with the author.

²³¹ Aleksandar Holiga, Interview with the author.

²³² Dario Brentin, Interview with the author.

²³³ Marko Mustapić, Interview with the author.

Following on the value expectancy theory, the behavioral alternatives have been perceived differently by the fans and the experts, thus pointing to a fluidity of attitudes within the fandom on how to combat HNS.

Croatian football fandom, despite being a well-organized movement against HNS, is at the same time a very fluid and heterogeneous movement, where different fractions of the same movement undertake diverse actions to contend with HNS. Mustapić poignantly states that this can be attributed to the fact that “the fans themselves are not to the fullest a rational actor, they are without a doubt an important social actor who is well organized, but they don’t have the discipline nor the ideological awareness that incites people to control their behavior at any given moment.”²³⁴ Value expectancy theory very much points out this lack of discipline and ideological awareness of the fandom, when a part of the fandom opted to use unconventional means of contention such as hooliganism or nationalism, believing that they would make the most effective damage to HNS, without recognizing the possible pitfalls of this behavior, which included the public and the authorities labeling the fandom as hooligans. This public labeling weakened the movement’s cause, and points to the fact that despite the movement having a hierarchy, this hierarchy is rather fluid, where certain fractions act independently from others, thus giving further credence to Mustapić’s view of the fans as not fully rational actors, but also indicating that Croatian football fandom as a social movement is at the same time fluid with flexible membership.

²³⁴ Marko Mustapić, Interview with the author.

VI. Conclusion

The thesis started its research with the intention to enter the current debate in the Croatia regarding the perception of Croatian football fandom, who are seen by most media, authorities or HNS as hooligans and political extremists. However, the thesis entered the debate from an academic point of view, arguing the opposite, that in whole, Croatian football fandom should be seen as a social movement in contention with HNS. To follow up on that hypothesis, the thesis established a clear research narrative, which through five chapters analyzes in detail the issues at hand. The thesis used the third chapter to introduce the most important features of the fan culture and to introduce such terms as hooliganism, fan ritual or politics in sports, which proved crucial for further analysis. This was followed up by a chapter on the origins of Croatian football fandom, which was a necessary addition to the thesis to explore the roots of social and political activism of the fandom, and how this influenced the future activities of the fandom. This chapter was then followed with the fifth chapter, which includes the fieldwork I conducted during April 2017, where the chapter itself deals with the question, if Croatian football fandom in their contention with HNS can in fact be considered as a social movement.

In light of Tilly and Tarrow's influential concept of social movements, and taking into account definitions of social movements developed by Opp, Jenkins and Form, and McCarthy and Zald, and applying them on to the case study of Croatian football fandom, the thesis undoubtedly confirmed that Croatian football fandom through its contention with HNS developed and established itself as a social movement in Croatia. The fandom has been leading a decade long and sustained campaign of claim-making against HNS, their main target of contention. However, the fandom also through their activity in amending the 'Law on Sports' made significant claims to political actors, Croatian authorities and political elites to actively engage in solving the corruption in Croatian football, which is a good example how a social movement wants to bring about change in society. Also, the fandom consists of a collectivity

of actors, not just football fans, but also non-football related actors such as lawyers, volunteers or activists who want to influence a certain target, which is HNS. In the process of their contention with HNS, the fandom developed a set of opinions on how to bring about changes in Croatian football, but due to the fluidity of the movement, some participants share the beliefs of institutional contention as a priority, whereas other parts of the fandom consider extra institutional contention as the best way possible to contend with HNS. All those elements point to the fact that Croatian football fandom does indeed establish itself as a social movement.

To advertise their claims, the fandom uses a variety of repertoires (explored in detail in chapter five) from petitions, public protests, boycotts, fan solidarity, to more organized and specialized associations to articulate their claims. In the case study of Croatian football fandom, those specialized associations for claim-making can be clearly seen through citizen initiatives Our Hajduk (NH) and Together for Dinamo (ZZD), which developed from the core of the fan groups of Torcida and the BBB. Both initiatives organized several claims against HNS, where Our Hajduk developed as a highly-organized initiative intend on contending with HNS through institutional and legal channels, best seen through Our Hajduk's role in the amendments on the 'Law on Sports.' Altogether, contemporary Croatian football fandom in their contention with HNS fits perfectly into several theories of social movement, and the fandom should be considered as such.

Also, important to note is that the fandom as a social movement is at the same time very fluid and heterogeneous in part because the movement emerged from two centers in Croatia, Zagreb and Split, but also in part due to structure of football fan groups, who are characterized by fluid and flexible membership. This fluidity had an impact on the movement to adapt other repertoires of contention who cannot be considered as conventional, notably hooliganism and instrumentalization of nationalism. Those means were then used in contention with HNS, as they were perceived by a part of the fandom as having the necessary utility (value expectancy

theory) to cause considerable damage to HNS, which proved that the movement as such is very fluid, flexible and heterogeneous.

Consequently, the thesis managed to explore in detail its central research question and to confirm its main research hypothesis, that Croatian football fandom in its sustained contention with HNS, established itself as a social movement in Croatia. Also, in their contention with HNS, the fandom as a social movement uses various means of contention, where the expressions of nationalism in several incidents involving the fandom (Milano and Split) should not be understood as cases of banal and hot nationalism, but as unorthodox repertoires of contention by the fandom. The development of Croatian football fandom into a social movement was not a spontaneous process initiated by the fans, but it was rooted in their long history of political and social activism, which was explored in depth in chapter four of the thesis. Croatian football fandom had an extensive history in mobilizing for various social and political causes, and that was best seen when the BBB and Torcida protested against the Yugoslav regime, promoted Croatian nationalism, and later rallied against HDZ and President Tuđman. This strong mobilization potential, anti-establishment outlook and the history of political and social activism that Croatian football fandom acquired over the years were important elements that influenced the development of the contemporary fandom into a social movement.

The perception of the Croatian authorities or HNS that the fandom should be considered either as hooligans or political extremists is rather misguided. The thesis managed to show that, although acts of hooliganism occur and that expression of nationalism feature in fan iconography, those occurrences are not as frequent that one could develop general conclusions that Croatian football fandom should be solely considered as hooligans or political extremists. Such a perception is erroneous as only a small number of the fandom partakes in acts of hooliganism or radical nationalism. As such, contemporary Croatian football fandom as a whole

should not be seen as hooligan or extremists, but it should be foremost regarded as a social movement in contention with HNS.

The thesis provides a detailed and extensive research on Croatian football fandom, their origins, as well as their activism, which turned into a fluid social movement. Also, the thesis managed to establish a successful analysis on how some unlikely societal organizations such as football fan groups can organize and become important civil organizations with a possibility to influence daily politics. Due to the limitations of the thesis and the limited scope of research, I was not able to include other notable fan groups in Croatia, and how they figured into the narrative of the social movement, and if they contributed to the fandom's contention with HNS. Also, the thesis due to the limitations was not able to go into more detail for other hooligan incidents involving Croatian fans over the decade, and if those acts should be understood within the context of the struggle with HNS or just basic expressions of violence, banal nationalism or disorder. The thesis only briefly mentions the incident in Saint Etienne, as the author preferred to focus more on hooligan acts that were characterized by instrumentalization of nationalism, more than instrumentalization of violence.

Generally, the contribution of the thesis and its originality in the scholarly research on football comes into forefront with the thesis' concentration on football fans as a social movement and as a social actor, something that has not yet been explored in detail by academics working in this specific field. The thesis does devote considerable time to explore hooliganism, but not from the usual scholarly perspective, which focuses on hooliganism as radical expression of fan culture, as an expression of masculinity, or as an expression of fans' penchant for violence, but from a perspective of a social movement, where hooliganism along with nationalism are used as repertoires of contention. As such, the thesis develops an original approach and contributes to the existing field on the research on sports, football, social movements and nationalism.

The thesis by focusing on the fandom as a social movement provides a scholarly research on a new and recent phenomenon within Croatian society, something that has not yet been explored in detail by domestic or foreign academics. However, another original contribution of the thesis is the implementation of value expectancy theory to understand the behavior of the fandom, something that has not yet been conducted in research on football fandoms and something that can be used as a basis for future research on football fandoms, not only in Croatia, but also in other case studies in Europe. The thesis managed to fill the academic void on the research on football fandoms, by focusing on a topic that is notably unexplored by scholars, visible through the lack of scholarly literature on the topic. As such, the thesis offers a good foundation for future research on issues of sports and politics, sports and nationalism, and society and sports, particularly in Croatia.

Subsequently, the thesis leaves open several possible research options for future research, something that the thesis, due to limitations, did not manage to address. A possible research topic that the thesis did not manage to explore in detail is how the post-social transformation of Croatia impacted the current state of football, and if the situation in football reflects the general situation in Croatian society. The thesis, also touches upon the problem of clientilistic networks and political interlinkage in and outside of football in Croatia, but due to the scope of the research, I was unable to pursue that research topic to the fullest, but nonetheless it remains a viable topic for further research. The thesis pointed out the problem of administrative, judicial and governmental weaknesses in Croatia, which was reflected in Croatian football, but the problem could possibly be present in other spheres of Croatian society, making it another possible research topic.

The thesis can also be used for future research outside of the case study in Croatia. Specifically, the thesis can be a basis for future case studies of comparative analyses that deal with football fandoms, football or social movements. The case study can be used for comparison

with other European fandoms, and if Croatian football fandom is a unique case of a fandom developing into a social movement, or if those occurrences can be observed on a regional basis, something that is specific for Eastern Europe, Southeast Europe, ex-Yugoslav countries, or is it observable in countries of Western Europe, such as England, Spain, Italy or Netherlands, who are known for their fan groups. Also, the thesis offers an opportunity for future research in social movements, where this case study can be compared with other cases of social movements both in Croatia or in Europe.

Overall, the thesis through its research on Croatian football fandom pointed out, how a sport, that is perceived by the public as a fun past-time, can have visible, direct and complex implications in a certain society. The thesis managed to convincingly show that within football a myriad of elements ‘interact’, from politics, nationalism, violence to social activism, which in the end can significantly impact daily lives. With that in mind, football, known as “the people’s game”, not only influences people’s emotions, but it can also have a real impact in today’s societies.

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