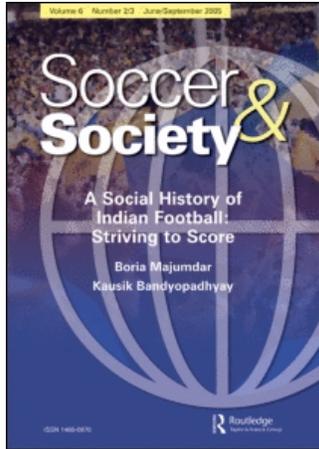


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# Football Hooliganism in the Netherlands: Patterns of Continuity and Change

Ramón Spaaij

*This article analyzes the emergence, development and dominant features of football hooliganism in the Netherlands. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, the author shows that contemporary football hooliganism in the Netherlands is more complex and less surveyable than in the past. Within this development, five dominant patterns are distinguished: the partial displacement of hooligan confrontations; increasing levels of planning and coordination; alternatives to physical violence; violence directed at the police and the heterogeneous social composition of hooligan groups. These patterns indicate that Dutch football hooliganism has changed rather than disappeared. The persistence of the phenomenon should be understood in terms of the attractions of the hooligan lifestyle to young men seeking adventure and excitement and the psycho-social pleasures associated with hooligan violence.*

## Introduction

The academic discourses on football hooliganism have attracted scholars from various disciplines and localities. The distinctive, mostly English, theoretical and methodological approaches represent a number of opposing academic factions. There has long existed a tendency to avoid cross-cultural comparisons except in the most general of terms.[1] The development towards a more internationalized research community, starting in the late 1980s and early 1990s with a number of international conferences and some non-English research publications on football fan behaviour, partly changed this tendency.[2] The internationalization of academic research on football hooliganism appears to have gained momentum in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Some edited volumes have certainly advanced comparative research into football culture and hooliganism,[3] and scholars from a variety of countries have published relevant papers in journals such as *Soccer and Society*, the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* and

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the *Sociology of Sport Journal*. [4] Despite these signs of growing cross-cultural comparison, historical and sociological accounts of the level and forms of football hooliganism outside Britain remain relatively scarce. This is certainly true for parts of Eastern Europe and Latin America, but also for some Western European countries. A striking example of the 'many opinions, few facts' rhetoric is, arguably, the case of football hooliganism in the Netherlands. Foreign journalists and scholars regularly refer to the 'organized battles' of Dutch hooligans as a cause for international concern. In the build-up to Euro 2000, *The Guardian* reported that, 'Hooliganism has declined in Britain in recent years, but in the Netherlands it has got worse ... After gun battles in Rotterdam, Dutch police fear Orange disorder will wreck the Euro 2000 tournament.' [5]

The case of Dutch football hooliganism is of considerable theoretical relevance to the contemporary debate on football fan behaviour, in particular to discussions of the social organization and social sources of football hooliganism. In this essay I examine the emergence, development and dominant characteristics of the phenomenon on the basis of qualitative as well as available quantitative data. I try to show the major patterns of continuity and discontinuity in the evolution of football hooliganism in the Netherlands. The paper is divided into four parts. The first part examines the emergence of football hooliganism in the Netherlands and the process of national diffusion. I then turn to the development of football hooliganism in the 1980s and 1990s. In the third section, I analyse the recent patterns and developments in Dutch football hooliganism. Finally, I briefly examine some central features of the persistence of football hooliganism in the Netherlands.

Football hooliganism is viewed in this paper as a specific form of spectator violence at football matches. It is defined as the competitive violence of socially organized fan groups, principally with opposing fan groups. [6] Football hooliganism is essentially other-directed: for violent rivalries to develop and persist, the existence of at least one oppositional fan group is necessary. It is important to note that the native term for this type of behaviour is *voetbalvandalisme* (football vandalism). The use of this term became common among politicians, media and academics from the mid-1970s onwards due to initial official and media focus on the train wrecking exploits of Dutch football supporters. [7] Most academic studies of the time adopted a similar terminology, using 'vandalism' as an umbrella term for activities as diverse as missile throwing, fighting and verbal abuse. [8] From the mid-1990s, these types of behaviour have been more regularly referred to by academics and journalists as 'football violence', 'football crimes' or 'hooliganism'. [9] The Centraal Informatiepunt Voetbalvandalisme (CIV; Dutch National Football Intelligence Unit) and other government institutions continue to use the term *voetbalvandalisme*. These labels are, to varying degrees, all misleading since they group together distinctive types of offences caused by football supporters, including what I have defined as football hooliganism.

### **The Emergence of Football Hooliganism in the Netherlands**

British terrace culture has historically been a major influence for Dutch football supporters. Dutch fans have introduced various elements of this football culture into

their own styles of support, such as songs, chants and the display of scarves and flags. In the 1970s, Dutch football grounds witnessed the emergence of so-called 'sides', first in country's four main cities: Amsterdam (F-Side), Rotterdam (Vak S), The Hague (North Side) and Utrecht (Bunnikzijde). These sides had much in common with the British youth ends and emerged as a result of a similar process of internal differentiation. The sides predominantly consisted of young supporters in their teens and early twenties who congregated in specific areas of the ground, usually in the cheaper sections behind one of the goals. These areas were soon transformed into the exclusive territory of the young fans attempting to create a passionate atmosphere through vocal (chants) and visual (display of flags and scarves) support.

The emergence of the sides marked the beginning of an important discontinuity in the level and forms of spectator violence in Dutch football. The level of spectator violence at professional football matches in the Netherlands before the 1970s appears to have been comparatively low and there are no indications of an early tradition of football hooliganism. Throughout the history of Dutch professional football some inter-fan fighting has occurred, but this fighting does not seem to have involved more than uncommon, spontaneous outbursts of spectator violence.[10] Early incidents of spectator violence usually took the form of missile throwing or assaults on players or the referee. Spectator disorderliness was only occasionally directed at rival supporters. Incidents were usually triggered by events on the pitch, such as a controversial refereeing decision or defeat.[11] This pattern gradually changed in the mid-1970s as a result of the emergence of the sides and their increasingly violent inter-group rivalries. Spectator violence at football matches became increasingly detached from the match itself.[12]

Some sides were already the cause of some official and public concern by the early 1970s. FC Utrecht's Bunnikzijde obtained some degree of notoriety for its violent behaviour. The violence provoked by FC Utrecht fans encouraged rival sides to respond to these aggressions in similar ways, setting in motion the development of an early network of inter-group rivalries. The early incidents provoked by the sides were relatively spontaneous and unorganized. The fan groups attended football matches without planning violent confrontation, but they usually did not refrain from the use of violence when challenged by their rivals.

In those days [the early 1970s] you wouldn't go out looking for trouble. Rather you would firm up for away travel because you knew about their reputation. I mean, I had seen dozens of Utrecht fans waving bicycle chains above their heads saying, like, 'you're going to get your head kicked in'. That was unheard of back then. It both frightened and fascinated me.[13]

The behaviour of English supporters on Dutch soil played an important part in the transformation of (the mediated image of) spectator violence in Dutch football. English supporters were responsible for the first widely reported incident of football hooliganism on Dutch territory. During the UEFA Cup final between Feyenoord and Tottenham Hotspur, on 29 May 1974, visiting supporters attacked home fans in adjacent sections of the ground. Over 200 people were injured. The incident is widely regarded as the Netherlands' first genuine experience with football hooliganism and has been dubbed 'the day Dutch football lost its innocence'. [14] Apart from shocking the authorities and

the wider public, the incident stimulated the interest of many young supporters in British terrace culture and, in particular, football hooliganism. Supporters of several Dutch clubs travelled to cities such as London, Manchester and Liverpool to personally experience the atmosphere of English football. Visits of British clubs to the Netherlands were viewed with enthusiasm and anticipation. This was certainly the case for members of the F-Side who attended the annual pre-season tournament in Amsterdam, witnessing the infamous hooligan groups of Manchester United and Leeds United.[15]

In the early stage of football hooliganism in the Netherlands, the four main sides were involved in the vast majority of incidents. They provoked an upward spiral of competitive violence which revolved around establishing their hegemony over rival groups by invading their home territories and fighting them. It is important to note that only a section of the sides were actively involved in the violent incidents. Many young fans were drawn to the sides by their atmosphere inside the ground rather than by the increasing propensity to violence. The behaviour of the sides was increasingly noticed by journalists condemning their 'mindless' violence. The first televised domestic football riot, on 24 October 1976, showed FC Utrecht supporters challenging and chasing Ajax fans with bicycle chains. FC Den Haag and Feyenoord hooligans established a similar reputation for producing home-made bombs. In 1982, following the club's relegation to the First Division, Den Haag fans set fire to their own stadium, something which other sides considered an incomprehensible act.

The behaviour of the four sides and the related media attention set off a process of national diffusion. Fan groups throughout the country began to organize themselves in sides and imitated the behavioural patterns of the pioneering sides. In many cases, this process of imitation became particularly visible after young home supporters were attacked by members of the four main sides. The reputations of the pioneering sides also had an impact on some Belgian and German supporters, who, parallel to British influences, began to import certain elements of the Dutch hooligan scene. Young fans of Belgian Club Bruges, for example, created their East Side after having personally observed the misbehaviour of Feyenoord hooligans during a friendly match between the two teams in 1980.[16]

The emergence of football hooliganism in the Netherlands should be understood as a continuation of fights between rival (youth) groups in other contexts.[17] Such fighting initially took place between youths from different city districts and from different villages. From the mid-1970s, these inter-group rivalries were partly displaced to the football context as the different groups began to jointly occupy the terraces of their local or favourite team.[18] Local inter-group rivalries were temporarily suspended at match days and recreated along the lines of football affiliation, mirroring in many respects the 'Bedouin syndrome' (the enemy of my enemy is my friend, et cetera).[19] They now jointly fought their common rivals (rival sides) in the name of their club or city.

### **The Development of Football Hooliganism in the 1980s and 1990s**

Football hooliganism became a prominent subject on the Dutch political agenda in the second half of the 1980s. The Heysel disaster (1985) heightened fears over the potential

lethality of football hooliganism and resulted in the introduction of the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events.[20] Domestically, the level and seriousness of football hooliganism increased substantially due to the continuing national diffusion of the hooligan subculture and the radicalization of some inter-group rivalries. Live television broadcasting of a UEFA Cup match between Feyenoord and Tottenham Hotspur, on 2 November 1983, brought to people's homes the serious fighting between opposing supporters on the terraces of De Kuip. More than 50 supporters were treated for minor injuries and three English fans were taken to hospital for treatment of stab wounds. The stabbing of one English supporter by a home fan was repeatedly broadcast on national television. The Dutch television network NOS described the disorder as 'degrading scenes that have absolutely nothing to do with football'.[21] In March 1987, riot police cleared the home terrace of the Zuiderpark stadium in The Hague following attacks by home fans on visiting Ajax supporters. An international fixture between Holland and Cyprus in October 1987 was suspended after a Dutch fan threw a bomb onto the pitch, injuring Cyprus' goalkeeper. In September 1989, an Ajax fan was arrested after throwing an iron bar onto the playing field during a European Cup match between Ajax and Austria Wien. During a league match between Ajax and Feyenoord in Amsterdam, on 22 October 1989, two Feyenoord hooligans threw home-made bombs into a home section of the ground. The bomb contained fireworks and small bullets, injuring fourteen Ajax supporters. One home fan suffered an arterial haemorrhage. Riot police immediately cleared the entire away section and all 500 visiting fans were searched at the exit.[22] The incident was widely reported by national and international media. The BBC concluded that Holland was 'fast taking over as Europe's most troubled footballing nation'.[23]

The Dutch authorities introduced several security measures in reaction to the (perceived) growing threat of football hooliganism. Early containment strategies concentrated mainly on the segregation of home and away supporters and the deployment of larger numbers of police officers at 'high risk' matches. Fences were erected inside football grounds and clubs invested in the development of a security organization. More recently, the renovation, rebuilding or relocation of several Dutch football grounds in the early 1990s advanced compliance with post-Hillsborough requirements. Similar to developments in Britain, the post-Hillsborough approach to managing Dutch football features the recognition that security and safety are two separate issues and emphasizes the improvement of customer services and fans' experiences.[24] In 1989, the Dutch Football Association (KNVB) agreed with the clubs, in accordance with UEFA regulations, to gradually convert the football grounds to all-seater stadia by the end of the 1990s. Clubs also improved their ticketing procedures and controls, installed closed-circuit television (CCTV) and began to invest in the improvement of steward organizations.[25] It is important to note, however, that the shift towards a more customer-oriented approach to the management of football sits uneasily with the continuing emphasis on the containment of football supporters (for example, the introduction of an identity card scheme and compulsory travel arrangements).[26]

The repressive and techno-preventative containment strategies did not so much eradicate football hooliganism, but rather changed its dominant forms. Opportunities

for fighting inside grounds diminished, but hooligans responded to these changes by displacing their fighting to locations outside the stadia, such as city centres and train stations. Containment strategies also failed to prevent the occasional train vandalism and looting of shops and gas stations.[27] In the second half of the 1990s it became painfully clear that football hooliganism had not been reduced to any real degree. On 16 May 1996, Feyenoord and PSV hooligans confronted each other in Rotterdam's city centre forcing police officers to fire warning shots. After a match between FC Utrecht and Feyenoord, on 26 October 1996, rival hooligans pelted each other and the police with stones. Seven police officers were injured. On 17 May 1998, hooligans of Ajax, PSV and Feyenoord fought before and during the Cup Final between Ajax and PSV in Rotterdam. The celebration of Feyenoord's national championship, on 25 April 1999, escalated into a full-scale riot. Four fans were injured by police bullets.

The radicalization of the violent rivalry between Feyenoord and Ajax hooligans accounted for much of the political and public concern over football fan behaviour in the 1990s. Spontaneous and pre-planned encounters between the two groups took place at several locations. On 21 May 1995, for example, a group of 60 Ajax hooligans attacked a television studio seconds before the start of the talk show *Lief & Leed* featuring hooligans of Feyenoord and FC Utrecht. They smashed the windows of the studio canteen with stones. The Feyenoord hooligans immediately began to chase their rivals and vandalized the canteen and bar with objects such as iron bars. They roamed the environment in search of the Ajax hooligans, who had retreated after the initial attack.[28] The determination of Feyenoord and Ajax hooligans in seeking violent confrontation culminated in 1997. The encounter between the two groups on 16 February 1997 constituted a new element in the development of Dutch football hooliganism. Feyenoord and Ajax hooligans pre-arranged a fight near the A10 highway and maintained frequent phone contact in the week leading up to the event. The pre-planned confrontation never really materialized. The Ajax hooligans retreated after observing the larger, heavily-armed group of Feyenoord hooligans. The police arrived at the scene and forced the Feyenoord hooligans to return to their cars.

The intended confrontation finally came into being a month later, on 23 March 1997. On this occasion, there had been no prior arrangements. Feyenoord played away at AZ in Alkmaar, while Ajax played in Waalwijk against RKC. Although a revenge attack by the Ajax hooligans was expected, none of the Feyenoord fans knew exactly where and when. On their way to Alkmaar, on the A9 highway, the Feyenoord hooligans spotted a group of 100 to 150 Ajax fans in a distant field. The hundreds of Feyenoord hooligans abandoned their cars rushing towards their rivals. The first confrontation lasted only twenty to thirty seconds before the Ajax hooligans retreated. A minute later they fought their rivals once again, but were eventually forced back by a larger group of Feyenoord hooligans. A 35-year-old Ajax hooligan died after being beaten with various objects. In the aftermath of the incident, 45 Feyenoord and eight Ajax hooligans were imprisoned or banned for up to four years for their part in the riot. Although the confrontation at Beverwijk was generally perceived as a 'victory' for Feyenoord hooligans, with the benefit of hindsight most hooligans deeply regret the event. Football hooliganism, in their opinion, should not be about killing people.

I had a very bad feeling about what was going to happen. But basically you had no choice: we had to show up in order not to lose face. Looking back, I deeply regret the fight because someone died. It was never my intention to kill him, you know. You just want to fight and humiliate the opponent, that's all.[29]

### The Current Shapes of Football Hooliganism in the Netherlands: Some Qualitative and Quantitative Clues

The violent incidents in the second half of the 1990s suggest that football hooliganism in the Netherlands has far from disappeared. The quantitative data compiled by the CIV seem to confirm the idea that spectator 'violence' at football matches is not on the decline. Table 1 shows that the arrest rates at professional football matches in the Netherlands have not changed much over the last three seasons, but are higher than in the 2000/01 season. Recent arrest rates are also significantly higher than in the late 1980s, when the CIV first began to register the number of arrests at football matches (in the 1988/89 season there were 1,021 arrests; in the 1989/90 season a total of 950). It is difficult to determine the precise meanings of this increase since it may be indicative of changes in registration capacity rather than changes in the 'real' level of spectator violence. Furthermore, the listed arrest rates do not distinguish between different types of offences and, therefore, tell us nothing about the development of *specific forms* of spectator disorderliness (that is, football hooliganism).[30]

A closer examination of the arrest rates per club reveals that a small number of clubs account for a comparatively high percentage of the total amount of arrests per season. The seven clubs listed in Table 2 account for between 54 and 69 per cent of the total number of arrests at professional football matches in the Netherlands (36 clubs in total). It is difficult to draw conclusions from these figures. With the exception of ADO Den Haag, the listed clubs are among those drawing the largest crowds, particularly Feyenoord, Ajax and PSV. It is thus logical that more arrests are made at these clubs. Moreover, the arrest rates may reflect more policing strategies at high-profile matches than the actual problems these clubs are faced with. Finally, the arrest rates fluctuate significantly per season, partly due to the large number of arrests at certain single incidents.[31]

**Table 1** Number of arrests at professional football matches in the Netherlands, 2000/01 to 2003/04\*

Season	No. of arrests
2000/01	1107
2001/02	1840
2002/03	1558
2003/04	1617

\* Including league, cup, European Cup and friendly matches. Excluding arrests at matches of the Dutch national team and foreign supporters arrested at European Cup matches in Holland.

Source: Data provided by CIV.

**Table 2** Number of arrests per club, 2000/01 to 2003/04\*

Club	Season			
	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04
Feyenoord	134	347	246	147
Ajax	90	497	147	226
FC Utrecht	79	97	159	331
PSV	161	115	157	72
NEC	63	63	25	158
Vitesse	46	103	88	47
ADO Den Haag	29	53	120	81
Total	602	1275	942	1062
% of (total no. arrests)	54% (1107)	69% (1840)	60% (1558)	66% (1617)

\* Clubs with the highest number of their fans arrested (on average).

Source: Data provided by CIV and elaborated by the author.

A third type of statistics compiled by the CIV is the number of registered 'incidents' (Table 3). The CIV defines an incident as

an event requiring additional police deployment whereby the behaviour of a group of supporters aims at the following: (a) seeking a confrontation or; (b) causing damage or; (c) committing public violence or; (d) making discriminatory remarks or; (e) violent behaviour by supporters directed at the police and club security personnel (e.g. stewards).[32]

This broad definition frustrates a more sophisticated analysis of the development of football hooliganism since the registered incidents include both physical and verbal offences and fail to distinguish between qualitatively distinctive types of violence (for example, fighting; vandalism; missile throwing).

Due to the serious limitations of the statistical data presented above, in the remainder of this paper I examine the current shapes of football hooliganism in the Netherlands in a more qualitative manner. Recent studies have claimed that contemporary football hooliganism in the Netherlands is more complex and less surveyable and predictable than in the 1970s and 1980s.[33] Within this development, five dominant patterns can

**Table 3** Number of registered incidents at professional football matches in the Netherlands, 2000/01 to 2003/04\*

Season	No. of registered incidents
2000/01	-
2001/02	117
2002/03	96
2003/04	98

\* The CIV only registers 'incidents' since the 2001/02 season.

Source: Data provided by CIV.

be distinguished: (a) the partial displacement of hooligan confrontations; (b) increasing levels of planning and coordination; (c) violence against the police; (d) alternatives to physical violence; and (e) the heterogeneous social composition of hooligan groups.

### *Partial Displacement of Hooligan Confrontations*

Large-scale confrontations between rival fan groups inside Dutch football grounds became relatively rare from the 1980s onwards. Spectator violence in and around grounds has, however, not been completely eradicated. Adang has made the important point that:

Violence or the damage that results from it outside grounds is valued differently. Inside the ground violence is often less threatening and risky (apart from the use of bombs) than outside, because inside the stadium opposing supporters are always separated by fences. Moreover, they have been searched before entering the ground.[34]

Occasionally, serious fighting takes place inside Dutch football grounds. On 5 November 1997, a Champions League match between Feyenoord and Manchester United was marred by a violent confrontation between Feyenoord hooligans and visiting supporters inside the ground. A cup match between the Ajax Reserves and FC Utrecht in March 2002 was overshadowed by fighting between rival hooligans and between hooligans and the police. A total of 122 fans were arrested.[35] On 28 February 2002, several smaller fights occurred during the UEFA Cup match between Feyenoord and Glasgow Rangers, resulting in 40 arrests.[36] Journalists have occasionally used such examples to argue the 'comeback of hooliganism inside football grounds'.[37] Small-scale disorder inside football grounds is relatively common, including vandalism and assaults on stewards.

Instead of reducing the level and seriousness of football hooliganism, containment policies have had the unintended consequence of (partially) displacing inter-fan fighting away from the grounds. Hooligan groups may go to great lengths to circumvent pervasive official controls and confront their rivals at unexpected times and locations, either spontaneously or pre-planned. Hooligans sometimes defy compulsory travel arrangements by arriving in the city where the away match is played the night before the match, or by turning up at matches which do not involve their team with the sole intention of provoking disorder. Police officers and journalists have recently suggested that this type of behaviour is currently on the increase.[38] One newspaper went as far to suggest that 'the risk of a second Beverwijk is growing rapidly' and 'the relative quietness in and around football grounds is only an appearance'.[39] In the late 1990s and early 2000s, hooligan groups increasingly confronted each other at pre-season or mid-season friendlies, occasionally involving temporary inter-group alliances. FC Twente supporters fought a joint combination of Club Bruges and ADO Den Haag hooligans in August 1999. In January 2002, NAC hooligans were attacked by an alliance of FC Groningen and Belgian Germinal Beerschot supporters.[40]

Another source of potential conflict between rival hooligans is the nightlife, in particular the dance events and raves organized throughout the country. Rival

hooligans have occasionally confronted each other at such venues, for example at Dance Valley in 2004.[41] Finally, the deep-seated hostility between Feyenoord and Ajax hooligans has twice been contested at matches between the two clubs' reserve teams, mainly due to the absence of pervasive security measures at these matches. Recently, on 15 April 2004, dozens of Ajax hooligans intimidated and attacked players and managers of the Feyenoord Reserves after a match in Amsterdam. One player was treated in hospital for concussion.[42]

### *Increasing Levels of Planning and Coordination*

As part of their attempts to circumvent police controls, Dutch hooligan groups have become more coordinated and purposeful in their activities. Hooligans make use of mobile phones and, to a lesser extent, Internet to arrange confrontations. Several Dutch hooligan groups maintain instrumental 'liaisons' with rival groups, which allow for a more effective coordination of pre-arranged confrontations (prior agreement on a location, time, format), despite fears of being tapped by the authorities. Such confrontations often take the form of 'hit and run' fights; brief but serious disorder after which both groups disperse to avoid apprehension. Such assaults do not necessarily involve rival hooligans, but may also be directed at the police or security personnel.[43]

The increasing levels of planning and coordination of football hooliganism in the Netherlands should not be understood as signs of formal organization or hierarchical structures.[44] Attempts to convict hooligans as members of a 'criminal organization' have all failed. The Dutch Supreme Court concluded that there was insufficient evidence to sustain the prosecution's claims that the disorder at Beverwijk was the result of a structured criminal organization rather than initiatives of individuals or incidentally cooperating persons or groups of people. On the other hand, the judges sustained that the events had 'an organized character'.[45] A recent court case against alleged Ajax hooligans had a similar outcome; all charges of membership of a criminal organization were dismissed by the judges.[46] The social organization of football hooliganism does generally not exceed basic forms of coordination and synchronization within hooligans' own ranks and, occasionally, with rival hooligan groups. Hooligan confrontations do not result from formal structures but from a combination of common interests (i.e. in fighting), opportunities for rapid resource mobilization, inter-group contacts established over the years and familiarity with certain urban spaces (i.e. football grounds, routes to stadia, railway stations, city districts). The social cohesion of the larger hooligan groups appears to be limited. They consist of a variety of smaller, autonomously operating sub-groups or individuals that may merge in anticipation of violent confrontation.[47] There regularly exists some degree of conflict between the different sub-groups. During large-scale disorder, these more-or-less identifiable sub-groups are joined by individuals who do not belong to the hard core but who identify with the 'group' under specific circumstances and behave accordingly. These dynamics feature a process of self-selection, especially when disorder is more-or-less 'expected' (for example, at high-profile matches): (young) fans who tend to identify with the group are likely to be present, whereas others will not.[48]

There is no evidence of formal leadership within Dutch hooligan groups. Influential informal leaders or 'regulators' usually derive their position from their seniority, prestige or organizational skills.

There is no formal hierarchy or anything. Of course there are people who coordinate certain activities, who say 'we go there at this time'. There is always someone who first mentions that, but they are different people. Sometimes it's one person and the other time it's others. You cannot pick anyone as the leader of the group. The only hierarchical structure is in terms of seniority. Long-standing hooligans usually have more prestige than younger ones. That's logical, isn't it? I mean, that's how it works in companies too.[49]

Rather than being formally organized, experienced hooligans are street wise and have developed a practical understanding of the opportunity structures for football violence and policing strategies.[50] During confrontations they often remain in the background while younger hooligans more eager to 'prove' themselves engage in the actual fighting or missile throwing. The latter category is therefore more often arrested than the more matured hooligans.[51] More generally, certain 'regulators' within the hooligan groups focus predominantly on logistic and organizational tasks, such as obtaining tickets for specific sections of the grounds, travel arrangements or disseminating temporary behavioural codes (for example, verbally or through leaflets). Their organizational skills are also perceptible in the organization of dance parties and funerals for deceased hooligans. On such occasions hooligans may cooperate with the police, issue and enforce certain behavioural codes or create a temporary unit of ushers.

### *Alternatives to Physical Violence*

Experienced hooligans are aware of the fact that the opportunities for collective violence at football grounds are more limited than in the past. They regularly attempt to utilize certain alternatives to physical confrontations which, at times, may generate the same excitement or fun as physical violence.[52] Hooligans sometimes force authorities to take draconic security measures by spreading false information on upcoming events and potential confrontations. Experienced hooligans also consciously attempt to disrupt or circumvent undesired security measures using their bureaucratic networks and skills to appeal to banning orders, ticket pricing or travel arrangements. Moreover, hard-core supporters and hooligans alike have used their experience and networks to protest against disproportionate policing strategies. Feyenoord supporters lodged an official complaint against the Amsterdam riot police in 2002 for the disproportionate use of violence and the infliction of injury on a number of visiting fans. The accusation was sustained by the Commission for Police Complaints.[53] In 2004, FC Utrecht's official supporters' club protested against the aggressive policing of its members by displaying a photo of one of the riot police officers allegedly involved in the incident on the internet.[54] These types of 'fan activism' have blurred the ideal-typical distinction between hard-core (non-violent) supporters and hooligans since both categories may be similarly involved in the protests, which occasionally take on more threatening or violent dimensions. Examples of the latter are the blocking of railway

tracks by FC Utrecht supporters in March 2002, the threats directed at cinemas throughout the country to prevent the broadcasting of the Ajax documentary *Daar hoorden zij engelen zingen* in December 2000 and, in March 2001, the intimidation of actors participating in the play *Hooligans* which, consequently, was suspended.[55]

### *Violence Directed at Police*

Hooligans do not merely fight each other but may also confront the police, especially when the latter is attempting to separate the warring parties. Some hooligan groups view the police as a legitimate opponent, as part of the violent inter-group rivalries.[56] Violent behaviour directed at the police takes on different forms ranging from small to large scale. In the early 1990s the police first observed a process of polarization in their interactions with hooligan groups. Regular police officers perceived their influence on hooligans to be on the decline and, to avoid further endangerment, they were increasingly substituted by riot police.[57] More recently, hooligans have occasionally attacked police officers and riot police *en masse*. FC Utrecht hooligans fought the riot police after an away match at Ajax on 29 February 2004. Earlier that month, ADO Den Haag supporters forced back riot police after the latter had charged the away section of the Amsterdam Arena following away fans' vandalising of seats. The most widely reported incident of attacks on the police took place after a match between Feyenoord and Ajax in Rotterdam, on 17 April 2005. Hundreds of Feyenoord supporters attacked riot police officers and pelted them with stones and bottles, injuring 42 officers. In the aftermath of the incident the police displayed photographs of suspected Feyenoord fans on television and the Internet. Conflicts between hooligans and the police have also emerged as a consequence of the fan projects and intelligence-led policing strategies carried out at a local level. The *Hooligans in Beeld* (Hooligans in View) project, which closely monitors known hooligans in and outside the football context, has been introduced in several police districts and will soon be implemented at all professional football clubs in the Netherlands. A secondary consequence of the project has been the polarization of the relations between hooligans and the police. On some occasions police officers involved in the projects have been the victims of intimidation and physical violence.[58]

### **The Heterogeneous Social Composition of Hooligan Groups in the Netherlands**

The historical development of the social composition of Dutch hooligan groups features both continuities and changes. The emergence of football hooliganism in the Netherlands, in the early 1970s, should be located within the context of post-war social changes. Youth began to emerge as a distinct social category with its own cultural practices and styles, and were increasingly influenced by British youth subcultures. In the country's main cities large numbers of working-class youth from different districts and suburbs began to attend football matches.[59] The football hooligans were characterized by their relatively low levels of education.[60] Van der Brug has argued that in the Dutch situation 'there is a relationship between individual downward mobility and participation in football hooliganism, a situation which is quite different from the

pattern in Britain, where the explanatory factors are much more collectivistic and highly related to social class'.[61] At this relatively early stage of football hooliganism in the Netherlands there were signs of significant variations in the social backgrounds of hooligans. In their early analysis of the Z-side at FC Groningen, Veugelers and Hazekamp contend:

There are a number of differences between the social position of the inner-city group and the various district groups ... They [members of the inner-city group] more often have lower educational levels or quit their studies, are more often unemployed and have more experiences with correctional institutions and prisons. Youths from the district groups usually live with their parents, have a paid job or are at school.[62]

There is evidence to suggest that, in recent years, the social composition of football hooligans in the Netherlands has become more heterogeneous, though there are important variations.[63]

I will illustrate this point by a brief examination of the social backgrounds of hooligans at two Dutch football clubs: Feyenoord and Sparta Rotterdam.[64] The majority of Feyenoord hooligans grew up in working-class areas, but in recent years the group's class composition has become somewhat more heterogeneous. Very few hooligans are long-term unemployed and the vast majority earn a moderate income. Many older hooligans are skilled manual workers employed as builders, dockworkers, carpenters, bouncers, and so on. Although certain older hooligans have experienced a degree of upward social mobility, they are not beyond their cultural roots and male friendships networks. Their involvement in football hooliganism as well as, for many hooligans, their involvement in the club constitutes a major source of excitement and identity in their lives. The younger hooligans either work or are still in school. Many of them have a relatively low level of education. They tend to dislike school and experience problems with teachers and fellow students. Their parents often do little to prevent their sons from engaging in delinquency and hooliganism. Parental neglect is in several cases related to the disruption of families or to drug or alcohol abuse. Several young hooligans grow up in a social environment (family, school, neighbourhood, football club, nightlife) in which aggression and the threat and use of violence are part of everyday life. Their reputation for physical prowess provides them prestige among peers and is used to intimidate other young men in everyday life. Within their friendship groups physical prowess, risk taking and the ability to 'look after yourself' are dominant values. 'Sissy' behaviour is viewed with disdain. The quest for risk and excitement features centrally in their activities.

The social backgrounds of Sparta hooligans differ substantially from those of their counterparts at Feyenoord. Many Sparta hooligans are enrolled in universities, while some have already completed their university degree. Full-time occupations vary from teaching in primary or secondary schools to health care professionals and a printing-office employee. Only one of the group's core members is a builder.[65] Most hooligans can be characterized as 'middle-class'. Although Sparta hooligans celebrate a hard masculine identity based on physical prowess, their collective identity is also constructed in relation to Feyenoord hooligans and certain other Dutch hooligan formations. Whereas the latter are portrayed as 'rough, hard-core criminals', the Sparta

hooligans view themselves as a more sophisticated, fashionable ‘fighting crew’ and hooliganism is commonly regarded as a temporary lifestyle. As one hooligan put it:

“Feyenoord hooligans have very different backgrounds. I mean, many of them have no education, both parents on drugs, brought up in a culture of violence. Our group is completely different. We come from stable families, quite well-off, have certain values in life, an education. They will probably still be doing their business when they’re 35. I certainly won’t. I have others goals in life, you know.[66]

Sparta hooligans claim to be ‘addicted’ to the pleasurable emotional arousal associated with football hooliganism. They take pride in engaging in violent confrontation with rival hooligans before, during or after football matches.

An ethnographic study of core members of FC Haarlem’s hooligan group FCH Fanatics conducted by one of my students, Jeroen Korthals, reached very similar conclusions. Six out of ten study at a university level or have a university degree (BA, BSc or MA). The vast majority (around 80 per cent) of the self-declared hooligans claim neither to perceive themselves as ‘working class’, nor to have been raised in an environment conducive to aggression or the use of violence. In fact, they reject the use of violence in everyday life, but are hooked to the adrenalin rush they get from engaging in, organizing and fantasizing about football-related violence.[67]

### **Football Hooliganism in the Netherlands: Some Concluding Remarks**

The dominant developments and characteristics identified in this paper suggest that football hooliganism in the Netherlands has changed rather than disappeared. Though stressing its persistent nature, I should mention that the lethality of Dutch football hooliganism is often over-estimated. Over the last three decades only two football-related deaths have been reported; one during the Beverwijk riot in 1997, and one in Enschede in 1991, where a FC Twente supporter was stabbed to death by a Feyenoord hooligan the night prior to a match between the two teams. By way of conclusion, in this final section I briefly examine two inter-related features that may enhance our understanding of the persistence of the phenomenon. The first characteristic is the changing age range of Dutch football hooligans. Several older hooligans (30 to 45 years old) have been part of their groups since the late 1980s or before. Some are still centrally involved in football hooliganism, while others are part-time participants mainly ‘turning up’ for high-profile matches. Their maturity and experience has enabled them to develop a practical knowledge of the opportunity structures for football violence and policing strategies as well as to establish instrumental or affective ‘relations’ with other groups. Besides being ‘addicted’ to the ‘buzz’ of football violence, some older hooligans have certain economic interests for continuing their involvement in hooligan groups (for example, drug trade; merchandising). At the other end of the age continuum, in the late 1990s and early 2000s new hooligan youth groups emerged at several Dutch football clubs. These youth groups are either integrated into the established hooligan groups or operate autonomously (with their own names and symbology). Their members are mostly young males between 15 and 23 years old. There is generally high usage of hard drugs (cocaine, speed, ecstasy) among young hooligans. Their behaviour

is viewed by many older hooligans as violating, in some ways, the unwritten ‘codes of conduct’, for example by attacking non-hooligans. For many young supporters, identifying with or engaging in football hooliganism appears to be a fashionable way of life closely related to the media attention and entertainment industry surrounding the hooligan experience (private video footage, books, documentaries, clothing). The Internet plays a central role as a site for socialization and ‘cyberhooliganism’.[68] National and international hooligan confrontations are chronicled on special hooligan web sites. Many self-declared young hooligans are not physically violent but rather attempt to manifest themselves through verbal warfare (threats; abuse; bragging) on the Internet.

The second feature that provides insight into the persistence of football hooliganism are the psycho-social pleasures its participants derive from the hooligan experience. Accounts of hooligans reveal how they experience an overpowering ‘buzz’ or adrenalin rush when confronting their opponents.[69] In the Dutch case, the ‘buzz’ of football hooliganism does not appeal exclusively to young working-class males. The seductions of football violence should not be understood as merely an epiphenomenon of social class – even though this may certainly be the case in specific situations, such as at football clubs located in areas with strong working-class traditions and legacies (see my description of the hooligan group at Feyenoord). The pleasures derived from the intense emotional states of the hooligan experience are closely related to hooligans’ anticipation of ‘disorder’ and ‘chaos’. Hooligans routinely describe their ‘battles’ as a war scenario in which ‘all hell breaks loose’. They regularly evaluate previous clashes or fantasize about upcoming events. In reality, most fights are quite brief and comparatively few people are seriously injured. Instead of asking why football hooliganism occurs, one might ask: why does it not occur more often? Most spontaneous fights do not escalate into serious collective violence and the vast majority of pre-arranged confrontations never materialize, for instance because one group (or both) fails to ‘show’ or runs away, or because police disrupt their plans. The ‘buzz’ of football hooliganism is not only intimately connected to anticipation, but also to (overcoming) fear. Courage, in this sense, is not the absence of fear but rather the sufficient discipline to perform when one is afraid.[70]

Police measures against football hooliganism have reduced the opportunities for experiencing the ‘buzz’ in and around football grounds, but the hooligan experience (real or mediated) remains ‘highly desirable to large numbers of prospective participants’.[71] Playing into this demand, a transnational market in the reproduction or simulation of football hooliganism – in print, film, video games and clothing – has emerged. Websites such as [www.hardcorehooligan.nl](http://www.hardcorehooligan.nl) offer a range of material on the subject of football hooliganism, such as press reports, real-time video clips and a messageboard. Similar modes of reproduction and interaction can be found in some football ‘fanzines’. Some Dutch fanzines contest the cultural properties of ‘regular’ football fans, emphasizing instead the hard masculinity celebrated by football hooligans.

## Notes

[1] Moorhouse, ‘Football Hooligans: Old Bottle, New Wines?’, 490.

- [2] Notably: O'Brien (ed.), *European Conference on Football Violence*; Giulianotti, Bonney and Hepworth (eds), *Football, Violence and Social Identity*; Roversi, 'Football Violence in Italy'; Giulianotti, 'Scotland's Tartan Army in Italy'; Peitersen, 'Roligan. Un Modo d'Essere dei Tifosi Danesi'; Horak, 'Things Change'; Bromberger, Hayot and Mariottini, "'Allez l'O.M., Forza Juve'".
- [3] Armstrong and Giulianotti (eds), *Football Cultures and Identities*; Armstrong and Giulianotti (eds), *Fear and Loathing in World Football*; Dunning, Murphy, Waddington and Astrinakis (eds), *Fighting Fans*.
- [4] For example: Pilz, 'Social Factors Influencing Sport and Violence'; Andersson, 'Swedish Football Hooliganism, 1900–1939'; Spaaij and Viñas, 'Passion, Politics and Violence'.
- [5] *The Guardian*, 2 May 1999.
- [6] For an elaborate conceptualization, see Spaaij, 'The Prevention of Football Hooliganism'; cf. Giulianotti, 'A Different Kind of Carnival'.
- [7] For example, in the first official inquiry into the matter, Hartsuiker, *Rapport van de Project-groep Vandalisme door Voetbalsupporters*.
- [8] Siekmann (ed.), *Voetbalvandalisme*; van der Brug, *Voetbalvandalisme*.
- [9] Adang, 'Van Voetbalvandalisme naar Voetbalcriminaliteit?'; Ferwerda and Gelissen, 'Voetbalcriminaliteit. Veroveren Hooligans het Publieke Domein?'; van Gageldonk, *Hand in Hand*.
- [10] Miermans, *Voetbal in Nederland*.
- [11] Van der Brug, 'Football Hooliganism in the Netherlands' p.176.
- [12] Van der Brug, *Voetbalvandalisme*, 223.
- [13] Interview with Feyenoord supporter, February 2005.
- [14] *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 20 April 2002, 43.
- [15] Pieloor, van de Meer and Bakker, *F-Side is Niet Makkelijk!*, 22.
- [16] Verleyen and de Smet, *Hooligans*, 16.
- [17] Stokvis, 'Voetbalvandalisme in Nederland'.
- [18] Custers and Hamersma, 'De Genese van het Fenomeen Hooliganisme in Nederland', 23; Köster, 'Weer Trekken Wij Ten Strijde', 71.
- [19] Harrison, 'Soccer's Tribal Wars', 604.
- [20] Council of Europe, *European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular Football Matches*.
- [21] *NOS Nieuws*, 2 November 1983.
- [22] *NOS Nieuws*, 22 October 1989.
- [23] *BBC News*, 22 October 1989.
- [24] Tummers, *Architectuur aan de Zijlijn.*; COT, *De Amsterdam Arena*, 8.
- [25] KNVB, *Handboek Veiligheid*; Heijs and Mengerink, *Stewarding in Nederland*.
- [26] This dilemma cannot be elaborated on here to a full extent due to lack of space. The issue is discussed to some length in Bormans, 'Feyenoord Bedankt!'.
- [27] Van der Brug, 'Football Hooliganism', 177.
- [28] Van Gageldonk, *Hand in Hand*, 94–7; *NOS Nieuws*, 21 May 1995.
- [29] Interview with Feyenoord supporter, November 2001.
- [30] For an analysis of the flaws of statistical data on football-related arrests, see: Spaaij, 'Het Succes van de Britse Voetbalwet', 4–5; Spaaij, 'Hooligans, Politie en Informatie', 139–43.
- [31] CIV, *Jaarverslag Seizoen 2003–2004*, 36–41.
- [32] CIV, *Jaarverslag Seizoen 2002–2003*, 11.
- [33] COT, *Voetbal en Geweld*, 31.
- [34] Adang, *Hooligans, Autonomen, Agenten*, 32.
- [35] *Korpsbericht Politie Amsterdam-Amstelland*, 2 April 2002.
- [36] CIV, *Jaarverslag Seizoen 2001–2002*, 46.
- [37] See, for example, *BN De Stem*, 2 April 2002; *De Gelderlander*, 2 April 2002.
- [38] CIV, *Jaarverslag Seizoen 2003–2004*; *Eindhovens Dagblad*, 26 February 2005; *De Gelderlander*, 23 February 2005.

- [39] *BN De Stem*, 1 March 2005.
- [40] *Trouw*, 3 August 1999; *Drentse Courant*, 8 January 2002.
- [41] *De Volkskrant*, 23 August 2004; *Haagsche Courant*, 2 March 2005.
- [42] Auditteam Voetbalvandalisme, *Audit Jong Ajax*.
- [43] Van der Torre and Spaaij, 'Harde-kern Hooligans', 31.
- [44] Adang, 'Collectief Geweld tussen Voetbal – "Supporters"', 180.
- [45] Hoge Raad, 10 July 2001.
- [46] Rechtbank's Gravenhage, 6 July 2006.
- [47] COT, *Openbare Orde*, 125.
- [48] Adang, 'Collectief Geweld tussen Voetbal – "Supporters"', 180; van der Torre and Spaaij, *Rotterdamse' Hooligans*, 44.
- [49] Interview with Feyenoord supporter, October 2004.
- [50] Van der Torre and Spaaij, *Rotterdamse' Hooligans*, 27.
- [51] Interviews with senior police officers and security officers, January 2001 to November 2004.
- [52] Van der Torre and Spaaij, *Rotterdamse' Hooligans*, 75–7.
- [53] *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 11 November 2003; Jagan, 'Informatie op "Tien"', 65–6.
- [54] *RTV Utrecht*, 28 September 2004.
- [55] Spaaij, 'Hooligans', 6.
- [56] Ferwerda and Gelissen, 'Voetbalcriminaliteit', 92–3.
- [57] CIV, *Jaarverslag Seizoen 1990–1991*.
- [58] CIV, *Jaarverslag Seizoen 2003–2004*, 4; interviews with senior police officers, October 2004.
- [59] Stokvis, 'Voetbalvandalisme', 181.
- [60] Van der Brug and Meijs, *Effect-evaluatie Project Voetbalvandalisme en Jeugdbeleid*, 26.
- [61] Van der Brug, 'Football Hooliganism', 179–80.
- [62] Veugelers and Hazekamp, *Inside Z-side*, 22.
- [63] Ferwerda and Gelissen, 'Voetbalcriminaliteit', 87; de Haan, Nijboer, Bieleman and Meijer, *Nieuwe Aanwas Voetbalsupporters*, 10; Spaaij (ed.), *Supportersgedrag en Hooliganisme in het Nederlandse Voetbal*.
- [64] See, for example, Spaaij, 'Hooligans'; Van der Torre and Spaaij, *Rotterdamse' Hooligans*; Spaaij, 'The Prevention of Football Hooliganism'.
- [65] The analysis is based on my fieldwork among Dutch hooligan formations between 2000 and 2005. See for example: Spaaij, 'Understanding Football Hooliganism'.
- [66] These data were gathered in 2003 and 2004 and may therefore be somewhat dated.
- [67] Personal interview, July 2003.
- [68] Van der Torre and Spaaij, *Rotterdamse' Hooligans*, 77; Hulsteijn, 'Voetballen op het Internet'.
- [69] Giulianotti, *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game*, 52–3.
- [70] Collins, 'Gewelddadig Conflict en Sociale Organisatie', 189–90.
- [71] Giulianotti, *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game*, 53.

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