
Freedom Through Football

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Abstract

The utilization of a fan base in order to address social and political issues that is not directly related to football is a socially significant, if underexplored topic. The main reason for this practice-led research project is to use documentary practice as a means to explore and interpret fan activism through football. This research project will contribute to the understanding of the football fan activism as it outlines the profile of a group of football fans that use football in order to make a stand against any repressive attitudes wherever it derives from.

F.C. St. Pauli is a well - known German football team around the world but not necessarily because of its success on the pitch. The reason why this team is internationally renowned and so distinctive is the socio-political views that its fans have been projecting ever since the mid-1980s. FC St. Pauli fan clubs exist outside Germany, having 500 registered supporters clubs around the world, with fans in Europe, the US, Canada, South America and lately India (VICE, 2017). Greece is one of these countries. Greece has experienced dramatic political and societal changes due to the recession. This has led to a polarisation in politics between the left and right wing, which makes an ideal context to situate this research. The documentary, "*Freedom through Football*" narrates the story and activities of a group of male activists who established the St. Pauli F.C. fan club in the city of Thessaloniki, Greece.

Due to the absence of practice – led research about football fan activism and more particularly about FC St. Pauli in the social sciences, I am confident that this project will be a distinctive contribution to this field of the activist documentary. Throughout the years, film has played a significant role in the generation of political and societal changes. Activist filmmakers have tried to capture the essence of social movements by filming and presenting demonstrations and actions, which tend not to be aired on mainstream media. However, what distinguishes my work from other activist documentary films is the fact that I am not producing a didactic/propagandistic activist piece. My goal is to give space to the audience to construct their own understandings from the film.

Keywords: Football, Activism, Ultras, F. C. St. Pauli, Greece, Germany, Social Movements, Activist Documentary

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