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Methodological Note

In order to gain an understanding of Italian football, its operation and fan culture, it was important to undertake a variety of methods. Three principal methods were used: participant observation; interviews; and documentary research.

Participant observation

In order to develop an appropriate understanding of Italian football fans and the political climate in Italy, it was important to spend time with Italians, fans and those with an interest in the sport. I carried out a period of participant observation in the city of Livorno, ten miles south of Pisa, on the Tuscan coast. I spent six months in Livorno at the end of 2008-9 season. Livorno was chosen for two reasons. A.S. Livorno represents a typical provincial football club in Italy; it has enjoyed minor success, financial crisis and continued difficulties compared to larger football clubs. In 2003 the club returned to Serie A after a fifty-five-year hiatus. The major reason for the choice of Livorno was that their fans have distinctive left-wing identity that is the product of the city's unique history (Doidge 2013a). After the port at Pisa began to silt up, the Medici in Florence established a new port ten miles south at Livorno. To populate this new town, Florence passed the *Leggi Livornine* in 1593, which welcomed anyone, regardless of background. As a result the city was home to a number of merchants encouraged by the absence of tax. It was also populated with criminals and those fleeing religious persecution, including Catholics from Britain, Huguenots from France, and Jews from across Europe. The religious tolerance was highlighted by the fact that city did not ghettoize the Jewish population. This unique history and the identity of Livorno's fans made for an apposite case study.

Participant observation was chosen so I could gain an insight into Italian culture and football. Using this type of interpretative method allowed me to immerse myself in the local culture and gain a deeper understanding of the fans themselves. During the period, I stayed with two Italian families, which gave me extensive insight into Italian culture. Through these families, I made many

acquaintances with whom I could familiarize myself with Livornese culture and Italian football.

Gaining access to rival fan groups can prove problematic. Alberto Testa's (2010) excellent ethnographic account of key *ultras* groups of Roma and Lazio highlighted the difficulties in gaining access to important members. Serendipity was central to finding significant opportunities to participate in Livornese life. As an English researcher, who spoke Italian with a clear accent, it was not possible for me to operate covertly, regardless of any ethical issue this represented. My first piece of luck occurred when my former Italian teacher, who was from Livorno, discussed my project with her husband. He was a close friend of someone who organized local charity football tournaments. Through these tournaments, he knew a local supporters' club and the directors of the supporters' club invited me to meet with them. After this, I became a *socio* and regularly attended the club's headquarters and travelled with them to away matches. The other significant piece of luck came from the livorno now website. I had written some match reports for this site and when I arrived in Livorno I met who webmaster. She introduced me to a journalist for *Il Tirreno* newspaper, who interviewed me. Through these interviews I was approached directly by a number of Livorno fans. One particular fan, 'Levriero' was particularly useful as he provided many newspaper archives and helped unpick some of the intricacies of local culture.

Participant observation took place at a number of locations, not all of them football related. Most of these were in public settings, where all members of the public were able to attend. Specifically linked to football matches, participant observation took place at the football-related spaces, namely the stadiums and football supporters' clubs. I attended every match I could, both home and away. And always stood in the *Curva Nord*, home the Livornese *ultras*. Various spaces en route to the match were also included, such as supporters' coaches, trains (and stations), Autogrills and car trips. Broader locations were also incorporated, such as bars, nightclubs, restaurants and parties (Livorno has a number of outdoor parties and festivals during the spring and summer). I also attended several football-related political protests. Some of these sites were less public, or 'closed', such as the supporters' coaches, and some supporters' clubs' meetings. Most fans were 'ordinary' fans, as opposed to *ultras*. Participant observation was not only a way of obtaining data but also a means to develop a 'feeling' for the Livornese, and to understand the themes and approaches which the Livornese took to everyday life and football in particular.

Interviews

To embellish the participant observation, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with various fans. Fifteen interviews were conducted with supporters' club members. Many of these came from the club where the majority of the participant observation was undertaken. The director of this club facilitated others; through his social network he introduced me to other clubs, including the B52s, females supporters' club. Additionally, a focus group was conducted with leading members of one of Livorno's *ultras* groups, *Livornesi*. This was conducted in the bar that they used as their headquarters.

Interviews were also undertaken as part of a research project investigating anti-racism initiatives by fans across Europe in 2013–14 (supported by UEFA). Only part of this project was linked to Italy, but some interviewees that were particularly pertinent to *Football Italia*, namely, Lorenzo Contucci, a lawyer who supports AS Roma, is a member of MyRoma supporters' trust, and provides widespread support to *ultras*, particularly through his *asromaultras.org* website. Focusing on supporters' trust, I interviewed Riccardo Bertolin, another member of MyRoma (and a member of the Football Supporters Europe committee). I also travelled to Bologna to interview Carlo Balestri, a project worker with UISP and the founder of *Progetto Ultras*.

Documentary research

Four types of documentary research were undertaken: newspapers; books; fanzines; and social media.

Newspapers

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Italy does not have a truly national press. It is no coincidence that the biggest national daily newspaper is *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, which is dedicated to sport, and football in particular. I have been a regular reader of *La Gazzetta dello Sport* for many years, either online or whenever I could obtain a physical copy. The other national sport daily, *Corriere dello Sport* was also used for a wider understanding of Italian football. National dailies, in particular *La Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* were read in cafes and online.

Archival work

Any piece of academic research requires an understanding of wider academic and theoretical literature. In addition to the usual range of academic research, archival research was undertaken in football and Italian social history. The city library of Livorno housed a significant collection of works on the city and with the cooperation of the local library staff, a significant proportion of my early work in Livorno was based there. Wider academic research of football literature was also undertaken at the libraries of the University of Pisa, University of Bologna, *La Sapienza* (the University of Rome), and the British School at Rome. Unlike Britain, Italy does not have a culture of films about hooliganism and 'hoolie-lit' (Poulton 2008). Because these events still take place, there is no nostalgic demand for stories about masculine identity and violence. Ricky Tognazzi's 1991 film *Ultrà* provided an interesting insight.

Fanzines

Fanzine culture within British football fan cultures is particularly strong and this has provided a valuable insight into the outlook of particular fan communities and worthy of academic attention (Jary et al. 1991; King 1998; Giulianotti 1999; Millward 2008). Fanzines have also been adopted across Europe, particularly in Germany and the Netherlands (Spaaij 2006). However, there is no similar fanzine culture within Italy which Dal Lago and De Biasi (1994) ascribe to the intense coordination of the matchday choreographies. There are two national fanzines for *ultras*: *Supertifo* and *Fan's Magazine*. The fanzine *Supertifo* (Superfan) started in 1985 and has recommenced publishing in 2010. *Supertifo* conforms to the British notion of a fanzine, in that it contains a large number of 'comment' features, where *ultras* recount their experiences of football; from nostalgic stories of away games to recent problems. The fanzine also provides an 'agony aunt' column called '*L'avvocato risponde*' (The lawyer replies) where the well-known solicitor and *ultras* of AS Roma, Lorenzo Contucci, responds to a question relating to legal issues relating to football fandom. The majority of *Supertifo* is devoted to fans' photos of choreographies. This is replicated in the other national fanzine, *Fan's Magazine*. This is produced by *ultras* of Salernitana and principally operates as a medium to further display *ultras* choreographies. These magazines highlight the sophisticated ways that the *ultras* identity is produced and consumed. Despite being predominantly

photographic, they include commentary and discussion related to government measures and police actions, so operates as an important method to investigate *ultras* viewpoints.

Internet and social networking

The internet has produced a number of instruments for *ultras* identity to be re-performed and re-articulated. In particular, the website www.asromaultras.org provides extensive information on the *ultra*, in addition to information on AS Roma and its fans. This website is maintained by Lorenzo Contucci, the lawyer who defends *ultras* and provides legal advice for the fanzine *Supertifo*. YouTube also proved to be a valuable resource. Fans and *ultras* actively post videos and clips displaying their activities, in particular their choreographies and confrontations. Although these videos are not unbiased, they provide a useful example of how *ultras* actively perform their identity and re-perform it through the internet. YouTube, and other internet sites, provide extensive platforms for *ultras* to actively choose the image they want to portray. Other forms of social networking, in particular Twitter and Facebook, were used to ascertain conversations, ideas, and analysis of key aspects of Italian football.