

Pain and suffering in football: analysis of football-related fatalities in Brazil

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Abstract

In this article we aimed to describe and analyze the extent and nature of deaths related to the football spectacle in Brazil. So, we used and crossed data from different sources – field journals, academic books, reports from the Ministry of Justice and websites of security associations and of major Brazilian magazines and newspapers. We conclude that the geographic distribution of these deaths are directly related to the "weight" of each Brazilian region. We also observed that most of these deaths are originated in clashes between fans and in conflicts with the police, caused by the adoption of reactive and repressive strategies by the police. Furthermore, we point out that many of the deaths occurred outside stadiums and involved the use of firearms, as a result of the easy access to these weapons and possibly by a change of attitude of the most violent groups about their use.

KEYWORDS: Violence; Football; Deaths; Torcidas organizadas.

Introduction

Long and slow queues to enter football stadia. Filthy restrooms. Tickets with abusive prices, which decreases the attendance of poor fans. Uninformed and truculent cops. Matches held at inappropriate times, which finish when there is practically no more public transportation to get home. Exchange of threats between rival groups. Biased chants. Prohibitions that restrict parties in the stands. Football-related violence in Brazil, as well as in several other countries, should certainly be conjugated in the plural. These are violence facts. After all, several details in such spectacle may be considered violent, even though some of them are not perceived as such anymore, since we are already so used to them¹. However, although we recognize that we cannot lose sight of the violent character of

many situations experienced in football, we opted here not to extend the scope of our work and focus only on a specific type of violence: the physical one. Violence that, in the context of football, includes mostly body fights, stone throwing and gunfire²⁻⁴.

The most painful, visible and extreme side of this violence is certainly felt with the deaths caused by it. Nevertheless, such deaths obviously do not represent the only variable that must be considered to understand it¹. After all, situations of physical violence do not frequently result in death. A proof of this is that the first report of death in Brazil dates back to 1967, as we will see later on. But there are several records of physical violence between fans before that⁵. However, even if mortality rates are not the only variable to consider, they do not cease

to function as a key barometer of the problem. Barometer that, if placed alongside other data and studies⁶⁻¹⁷ can help us build a valuable diagnostic of such a situation. Diagnosis that, in turn, is critical to question and review the current security policies adopted in the country and to create new programs and projects for the prevention of violence in Brazilian football.

However, despite the importance of producing and analysing statistical data on deaths involving football fans in Brazil, the scientific field seems not to have taken charge of this task. Unfortunately, until now, studies carried out about this matter are scarce^a. Consequently, we are witnessing a real “dance of numbers” in the public debate on this subject, which move by the rhythm of the interests and purposes of people who propose them. Due to the void left in this field, public authorities, sports leaders and journalists have assumed the mission of elaborating and explaining such data, presenting mostly very inaccurate and clearly biased analyses, which certainly do not help to solve the problem⁶. Thus, in this study, we decided to assume the task above mentioned. More precisely, we sought to describe and analyse the extent and the nature of deaths related to the football scene in Brazil.

To do that, we structured the paper in five sections: in the first one, we briefly contextualized the violence related to such a spectacle; in the second one, we weaved some methodological considerations; in the third one, we discussed the historical development and the geographical distribution of the deaths reported; in the fourth one, we addressed the social actors involved in the deaths; finally, in the fifth part, we focused on the places where they happened and the weapons employed.

Contextualizing the football-related violence in Brazil

Contrary to the general belief, football violence in Brazil is not a recent phenomenon. Although (as shown below) the rate of football-related fatalities has increased significantly in recent years, accounts of violence related to football date back to the very inception of the sport in this country. For example, at the start of the twentieth century fans of football teams in Rio de Janeiro already provoked transgressive incidents during their railway travel to and from matches in the city’s suburbs. Fuelled by the fans’ hostile reception by local residents, fights and assaults en route to football matches occurred

with some regularity. It is important to note that the fights were not limited to the suburbs of the city, but also reached the clubs of the south of Rio, such as Flamengo. In a match in 1923, for example, rowers of this club intimidated, threatened and attacked Vasco da Gama fans. In the following decades, the disturbances continued. In the early 1950s, Flamengo fans threw bottles, stones and orange peels at the police, after an unexpected defeat by the club for Olaria¹⁸.

After the 1950s, acts of violence and vandalism in Brazilian football began to receive prominent coverage in the pages of *Jornal dos Esportes*, a major daily sports newspaper in Rio de Janeiro at the time. The paper published a series of reports on patron behaviour and the defence of “moralization” of football and the application of exemplary punishments to violent fans¹⁸. Although it is not possible to assume a direct relationship between the public concern about football violence (and its concomitant criminalization) and its actual rate or frequency, these reports do suggest its existence in the past, indicative of which is also the reporting of the first fatalities related to fights involving football fans in the subsequent decade.

While crowd violence is not a new phenomenon in Brazilian football, it was not until the 1980s that it came to be more strongly associated – mainly in the mass media – with a specific group of spectators: the so-called *torcidas organizadas*⁵. As we will see ahead, these *torcidas organizadas* (at least in their current form) emerged in the late 1960s, when Brazil was still living under the weight of the military regime and progressed in urban development. Most of its members are young^{15,19} and supported by a “periphery” lifestyle²⁰. In the stadia, they are concentrated in the stands (often behind the goal) and can be easily identified by their clothing (which refer to the crowd which they belong) and their own chants. As the members of the Hispanic American *hinchadas* and the European ultra groups, organized fans usually party more in the stands with their musical instruments, banners, flags and pyrotechnic devices, besides accompanying the team everywhere and fiercely supporting them during matches⁶.

Another feature of the *torcidas organizadas* is that they operate as an active mechanism of pressure in relation to their clubs and federations, promoting, for example, boycotts and protests²¹. Although physical violence does not constitute the main aspect of the aggregation of these fans, it is a constant item in the repertoire of some of them²². According

to a survey carried out by MURAD¹⁹, the fans who engage in acts of vandalism and physical violence are, however, only a small minority, around 5 to 7%. This minority, however, usually gets much public visibility. According to TORO²³, the *torcidas organizadas* tend to become “newsworthy” only when linked to urban violence and public disorder.

The association between these fans and violence inside and outside the Brazilian stadia became particularly established from 1988 onwards, with the murder of one of the leading and founding members of Mancha-Verde^b, one of the main *torcidas organizadas* of Palmeiras during this period²². In the mid-1990s football-related violence gained prominence on the media agenda and became regulated by political decisions. One episode in particular caught the public’s attention: the so-called ‘war of Pacaembu’, on 20 August 1995. On that day, fans of Palmeiras and São Paulo invaded the pitch and fought using batons, stones and other objects, resulting in the death of a 16-year-old boy as well as more than one hundred injuries, including more than twenty police officers. Ever since this incident various actors – such as politicians, administrators and police authorities – have been discussing the causes of violence in Brazilian football and proposed a raft of control measures.

For example, based on the report of the Committee on Peace in Sport²⁴, by the Ministries of Sport and of Justice, the Paulista Football Federation (*Federação Paulista de Futebol*, FPF, in Portuguese) have implemented, as a pilot project, a series of measures for the 2007 Paulista Championship, which are still in force until today.

Among other efforts, this report recommended that the *torcidas organizadas* should occupy a specific space for them, not allowing, elsewhere in the stadium, the movement of fans carrying

any form of identification of a *torcida organizada*. To enter such spaces, it was defined that the fans would have to possess the “fan-card”, obtained through their registration at the FPF. In addition, the Public Ministry of the State of São Paulo determined that all *torcidas organizadas* in the state would have to possess CNPJ (Brazilian Register of Legal Entities), having registered the statutes of the entity with the notary public, having a registry by the FPF, and telling their associates to perform the individual registration to obtain the “fan-card”. (p. 162)⁵

At the national level, the most important legal instrument of protection and defence of the fan is Law No. 10.671/03, better known as Statute of Defence of the Fan²⁵. Its entry into force was a milestone in the history of sports in the country, after all, “[...] although football had already reached the country in the form of spectacle and has been for two decades one of the most profitable merchandise of capitalism, up to 2003 the country had no laws governing the promotion of the sport as a spectacle” (p. 98)²⁶. Recently, the statute mentioned has suffered some alterations. On July 27, 2010, Law No. 12.299/2010 was sanctioned, which sought to complement it. Some of these changes have given rise to severe criticism from the leaders of *torcidas organizadas*. Among the arguments, the article that makes these *torcidas* civilly liable for the damage caused by their associates to the sporting venues, their immediate vicinity or in the round-trip commutes. Basically, the criticism is that such article is abusive, given that it holds the entire institution responsible for the action of some of its members⁵. This measure, as well as the previously mentioned ones, has not been able to prevent new conflicts either, as the survey results suggest⁶. Before presenting them, it is necessary, however, to present our methodological path.

Method

In many countries, including Brazil, there are no reliable incident rates available. Even when such databases are available, they tend to be incomplete and not directly comparable, due to diverging police capacities, definitions and legal categories. Measurement, then, is highly problematic in assessing the dimensions of the phenomenon. Media analysis to establish the extent of fan violence is also problematic because it is often unclear whether

we are measuring actual incidence rates or public sensitization to a perceived problem.

This dilemma features prominently in recent discussions of English football “hooliganism”. Most incidents are not readily visible to the media, since they occur away from football grounds. Partly due to this, relatively few cases are actually reported in the media. According to DUNNING²⁷, there has also been in England “a media policy of not pointing cameras

at incidents inside grounds, a policy based on the ostrich-like supposition that, if you do not show and directly confront a serious problem, it will somehow go away". In Brazil, we found that television promotes the opposite direction, expanding the dimensions of violence through sensationalistic treatment¹⁷. The incidents that occur in the stadia are shown remarkably by giving greater visibility to the people involved. Nevertheless, such processes of media amplification and de-amplification, in combination with other measurement problems, make it virtually impossible to measure with precision the national or international incidence of football-related violence.

Considering these measurement difficulties, and in the absence of any systematically collected data on the incidence of spectator violence in Brazilian football, we will use reported fatalities from 1967^c to 2012 as an indicator of the scale and intensity of spectator violence in Brazilian football. The death rate includes fatalities caused by violent behaviour in which fans were reported as either the aggressors or the victims, or both. We exclude fatalities as part of stadia disasters, i.e. those that resulted from failures in stadia infrastructures. We also exclude the fatalities that, although initially linked by the media to football, were, as it was indicated at the end by the criminal investigation, motivated by other reasons – such as drug trafficking disputes.

The total number of reported fatalities resulting from fan violence between 1967 and 2012 was 70. This total is based on our content analysis of field diaries (written by one of the authors of this article^d), academic books^{21,22,28} (which present information from different sources, such as direct observation, interviews and newspapers), as well as the main Brazilian newspapers, magazines, and websites for the period 1967-2012^e. We investigate, in combination, newspapers, magazines and websites for two reasons: because of the facility of access (in the case of websites) and because of the access to old editions (in the case of newspapers and magazines).

In order to reduce this fragility, we consulted the Public Ministry of São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Goiás, which were willing to help us. We submitted a list of names of victims and persons accused of homicide (supposedly) related to football in Brazil to the prosecutors São Paulo and Goiás. They returned to us a new list of victims and persons accused, along with the type of crime occurred, which allowed us to identify which homicides, in fact, were related to football. Such list was also delivered to the journalist of Minas Gerais, and the

Minas Gerais prosecutor. Such consultation was necessary insofar as, based on the aforementioned analysis on the amplification process of violence, we suspected that the media consulted could assign to the football universe deaths arising from external conflicts – which turned out to be true.

The three types of patterns we were particularly interested in are the frequency of fatalities resulting from fan violence, the geographical distribution of football-related deaths (the numbers of deaths raised in football fan conflicts have been related to homicide rates in each region), and changes in the scale and intensity of football-related fatalities over time. The figures presented here are necessarily incomplete and imprecise. They provide, at best, a very rough indication of the relative scale and intensity of spectator violence in Brazilian football. In addition, we also recorded the personal data of aggressors and victims (gender, age, club affiliation, etc.), the time and location of the incident, and the weapons used (if any).

The 70 reported fatalities between 1967 and 2012^f amount to an average of 1.5 per annum. Although worrisome, this number is still significantly lower than the count in the adjacent Argentina, considered today as the country most affected by the football violence problem. According to the official list of deaths in Argentine football, drafted by the NGO *Salvemos al fútbol* (<http://salvemosalfutbol.org/>), between 1922, when the first death related to football was recorded, and the end of 2012, there were 269 deaths, which is a total of 2.9 per year, and, between 1967 and 2012, there were 250 deaths, which is a total of 5.4 per year. Here, however, we must make a methodological clarification: this list considers all deaths that had some kind of relationship with football in Argentina, that is, it includes accidents, the so-called "natural" deaths, deaths associated with negligent practices within stadia, etc. However, these deadly outcomes constitute only a small part of the total deaths, approximately 12%¹.

The comparison with the United Kingdom is difficult, due to the absence of official statistics before 1991. Football intelligence reports suggest that the death rate in English football is generally low, when the football stadia disasters at Hillsborough, 1989, and Bradford, 1985, are excluded²⁹. Based on intelligence reports and in-depth empirical research, we would estimate that the annual death toll of football fan violence in England and Wales was generally higher in the 1970s

and 1980s than it is today³⁰. Over the past decade, the death rate in Brazilian football has been significantly higher than in England and Wales³¹. This difference can be explained in part by the measures taken by the British authorities to prevent crowd disorder in and around football stadia, the relatively frequent

use of firearms in clashes among Brazilian fans, the more central and more negative role of the police in Brazil, and, ultimately, the vastly different social and cultural context in which the violence should be understood. We will return to these issues further on in this article.

Results and Discussion

Historical development and geographical distribution of football-related fatalities

Figure 1 indicates significant variations in football-related fatalities over time. In recent years the number of fatalities resulting from fan violence appears to have increased significantly. Between 1967 and 2012 the average death rate was 1.5 per annum. During the last eleven years, from 2002 to 2012, the death toll resulting from football violence was considerably higher, reaching 2.8 per annum. This conclusion inevitably remains somewhat speculative due to potential processes of amplification or de-

amplification in press reporting of fan violence³², as changes in reported fatalities may reflect more the growing public sensitization to football-related violence than an increase in the actual incidence of football-related fatalities. It could also be argued that restricted media coverage during the military dictatorship logically results in under-reporting of historical traditions of spectator violence. On the other hand, the observed pattern corresponds to the increasingly violent and displaced inter-group rivalries within the subculture of the *torcidas organizadas*, evidence of which are the growing number of non-lethal confrontations between rival fans.

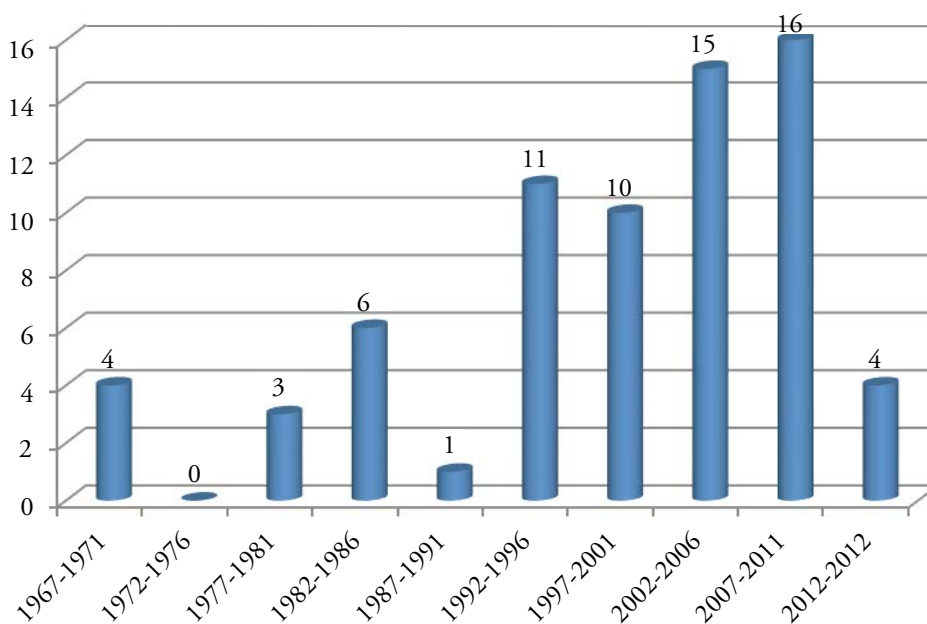


FIGURE 1 – Development of reported fatalities resulting from fan violence, 1967-2012 (n = 70).

More than one-third of football-related fatalities occurred in the states of São Paulo (35.7%) and Rio de Janeiro (20%). 17.1 percent occurred in Minas Gerais and 7.1 percent in Bahia. Almost

all fatal incidents took place in the urban centres of these states, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte respectively, besides two fatalities in the city of Campinas (São Paulo).

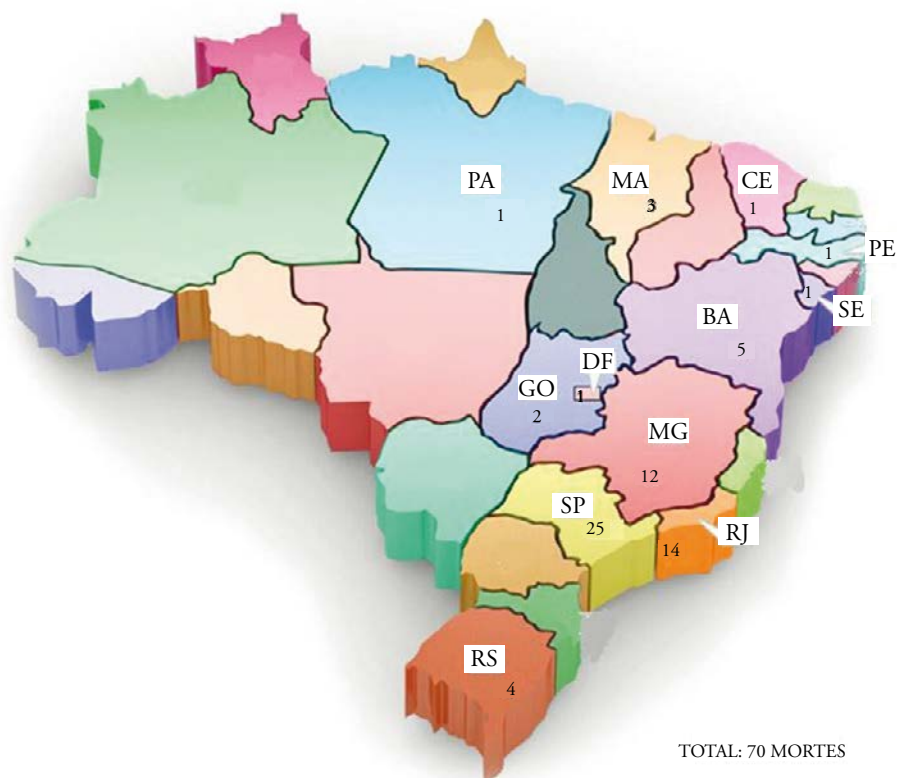


FIGURE 2 – Geographical distribution of football-related fatalities, 1967-2012 (n = 70).

An initial, though not entirely satisfactory, explanation for these figures can be found at the societal level, focusing on the scale and intensity of urban violence. In Brazil, the democratic transition has resulted in more diffuse and, arguably, more widespread forms of violence and human rights violations, whereby “it is no longer the opponents of an authoritarian regime, but instead a fragmented set of actors [...] who appear both as perpetrators and victims”³³. The cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo have become significantly more violent since the late 1970s, as have several other parts of the country. In Rio, homicide rates tripled during the 1980s, slightly decreasing and stabilizing in the 1990s³⁴. By 2000 there were a total of 3,135 registered homicides in Rio de Janeiro, equivalent to 53.6 per 100,000 inhabitants. Homicide rates in the city of São Paulo tripled from 1980 to 1995, reaching 47.3 in 1996³⁵. The rapid growth in homicides particularly affects young males from 15 to 29 years of age, both as perpetrators and victims of homicide.

The rise in homicide rates reflects growing rates of criminality and especially homicides among young men related to drug dealing and firearms trafficking^{36,37}. MACHADO DA SILVA³⁸ argues that the growing organization of human crime, from

the late 1970s onwards, emerged from the threat to physical integrity and private property, represented mainly by the convergence of common crime and drug offenses. ZALUAR³⁹ also associates the increase in urban violence with trafficking of illegal drugs and firearms, coupled with a warrior ethos of manliness, “insensitive to the suffering outside, proud of violations made on the body of his rivals, now seen as mortal enemies to be destroyed in a war without end” (p. 10). The increase in violence in the 1980s and 1990s is not simply the product of poverty, but of a combination of labour market and economic transformations, corruption in the judicial and penal systems, and political patronage^{34,38,40,41}.

Although social violence and spectator violence at football matches are clearly related, an explanation that focuses exclusively on general patterns of violence to explain a phenomenon as specific and, by all standards, as statistically marginal (when compared to general homicide rates) as football-related fatalities, is inadequate. For instance, homicide rates increased in most Brazilian metropolitan regions during the 1980s, and not only in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte. In fact, these cities are not necessarily the most violent areas in the country. In 2003, Rio de Janeiro was the seventh city in intentional homicides

and São Paulo the fourth³⁴. Vitória had the highest homicide rate, though none of the reported football-related fatalities occurred in this city. Moreover, within metropolitan areas violence is unequally distributed, with poor neighbourhoods and shantytowns experiencing the highest levels of violence^{42,43}. Trends in football fan violence do not simply reflect, in any direct and straightforward fashion, wider changes in criminality and public violence.

In view of this, we need to understand the logic of football in Brazil. As we noted in the introduction, the fact that there are no deaths in certain places of the country does not mean that, in those places, there is no violence. On the contrary, Paraná, for example, has no record of death; however, it has been the scene of several violent clashes involving football fans. Perhaps the most emblematic of them occurred at the end of 2009, when, outraged by the relegation of the club, Coritiba fans destroyed part of the facilities of 'Couto Pereira' (stadia of the club) and invaded the field, confronting the police. Outside the stadia, a woman was hit by a home-made bomb on her way back to the bus home and lost part of her left hand⁶. However, although there are indications that football violence has spread throughout the country, the fact that deaths are concentrated in a greater number in the Brazilian Southeast cannot be neglected. A possible explanation for this is that this region has the largest share of clubs and, consequently, a greater number of games. Another possible explanation (and perhaps even more important) is that it houses the most popular clubs, with a long history of violent rivalry between fans. The Northern region, for example, where there is the lowest record of deaths, has few clubs of popular appeal. The vast majority of its

inhabitants root for clubs in the Southeast region, such as Corinthians and Flamengo. The state of Pará is an exception; it is home of two traditional clubs, Remo and Paysandu. In this state was recorded precisely the only death in the region. Therefore, based on the above, we can say that the geographic distribution of deaths is directly related to the "weight" of each football club.

More specifically, it is worth considering the micro-social processes surrounding the involvement of young males in football violence. That said, we must address the theme of the subjective formations of sociability and conflict in relation to the *torcidas organizadas* in order for us to understand how they may be associated to demonstrations of physical force and the possession of firearms in Brazilian football. In this reasoning, we must also consider, as we will demonstrate, the role that agents of social control have played in the rise and escalation of football violence in Brazil.

Social agents directly implicated in football-related violence

The vast majority of reported football-related fatalities result from inter-fan conflicts (70%) or from conflicts between football fans and the police (10%), as we indicate in Figure 3. It should be noted that in many conflicts members of *torcidas organizadas* were reportedly involved, be it as aggressors or as simply victims. So, any explanation about football violence in Brazil should therefore address the issues regarding the culture and the evolution of these groups, putting emphasis on the subjective formations of sociability and conflictuality that sustain them.

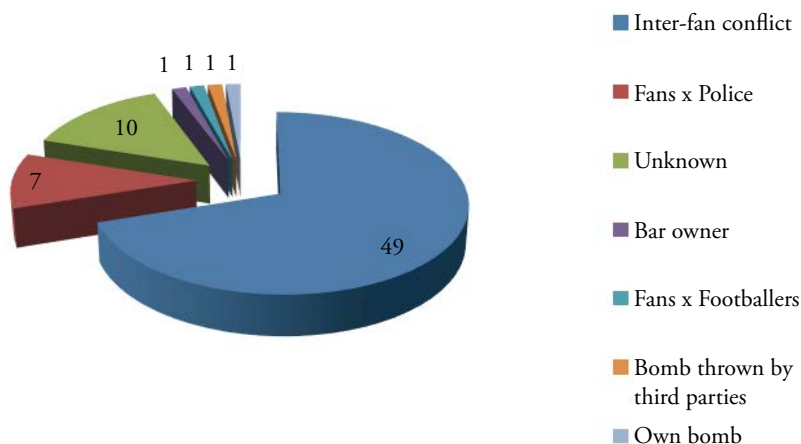


FIGURE 3 – Nature of football violence (n = 70).

In the eyes of most foreign observers, the rationale of *torcidas organizadas* differs completely from the carnivalesque image of Brazilian football. The emergence of the more partisan and aggressive football fan groups between the 1960s and 1970s indicated an important discontinuity in fan traditions. The new football fan groups gradually came to overshadow the traditional carnival associations, known as *Charangas* (the term *Charanga* refers to the music support groups that existed at the stadia). The *Charangas* emerged during the early 1940s⁸, and they consisted of groups of friends who put on team-related coloured clothes and played amusing music and carnival marches (“*marchinhas*”) in support of their football team. Similar to the current *torcidas organizadas*, these groups of friends were responsible for organizing shows in the stands in advance. They also followed their team so as to support it everywhere. Nevertheless, the group’s identification was mainly towards their team, never towards the group itself. In addition, the *Charangas* were closely linked to the figure of “symbol fans”, who represented the entire fandom. These fans tended to be “socially settled”, since they were aged between thirty and forty and were generally lauded by the media and by football authorities by virtue of being an enthusiastic fandom and offering positive atmosphere during the matches. Most *Charangas* did involve themselves in team affairs, without having any animosity with the team directors. Very frequently, groups also received financial or logistical support from football team directors so as for them to entertain teams and their fans^{44,45}.

The social function of the *Charangas* was contested by the newly established *torcidas organizadas*, which rejected their fandom practices due to its alleged “peacefulness” and “intimacy” towards football teams and football politics. In this viewpoint, the *Charangas* were thus too dependent on teams and were considered to behave uncritically in relation to them. One of the first *torcidas organizadas*, the Gaviões da Fiel (literally, the “Loyal Hawks”), was established at the São Paulo-based football team Corinthians in 1969. This group was created to oppose the elite committee that had been managing the club, and during its creation, the purpose was instead to promote fans’ rights. Its conception should

be viewed within the broader social context from late 1960s and early 1970s. At a time when human rights and civil rights were seriously limited by dictatorial rule, football provided one of the few occasions in which Brazilians could give vent to their political voice. In groups such as Gaviões da Fiel, people having few civil rights could stand up for their rights as mere fans, what immediately made them socially visible. Also in this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that the group holds a reputation for occasionally intimidating players and club officials who are seen as performing substandard⁴⁶.

Historically, Gaviões da Fiel was one of the first *torcidas organizadas* that adopted a more formalized organizational structure^{21,45}. This structure included the roles of president and vice-president, directors and advisors. It established an agenda for periodical elections, and administratively it functioned as a non-profit organization. Today Gaviões da Fiel remains highly influential. It has around 100,000 members and it also has its own samba schools. It is worth remembering that similar groups of fanatical supporters have also been created throughout Brazil. Very importantly, they have been largely inspiring themselves on the fan model established by Gaviões da Fiel. Currently, many of the bigger football teams in Brazil have multiple and largely autonomous *torcidas organizadas*. For example, we can distinguish at least eight different fan groups at the Rio de Janeiro team Vasco da Gama.

The *de jure* democratization of Brazil in the mid-1980s did not lead to a decline in the number of the *torcidas organizadas*. During the early 1990s the membership of many *torcidas organizadas* grew rapidly. For instance, in 1991 the fan groups Gaviões da Fiel, Independente and Mancha Verde had 12,000, 7,000 and 4,000 affiliates, respectively. By the end of 1995, they had respectively 46,000, 28,000 and 18,000 members²⁰. Furthermore, the *torcidas organizadas* are predominantly a male affair, since approximately 90 percent of affiliates of the bigger *torcidas organizadas* are (young) males. This situation is reflected in the number of fatalities resulting from fan violence: *all* reported aggressors and victims were males, and the vast majority were young males. FIGURE 4 shows the number of fatalities by age.

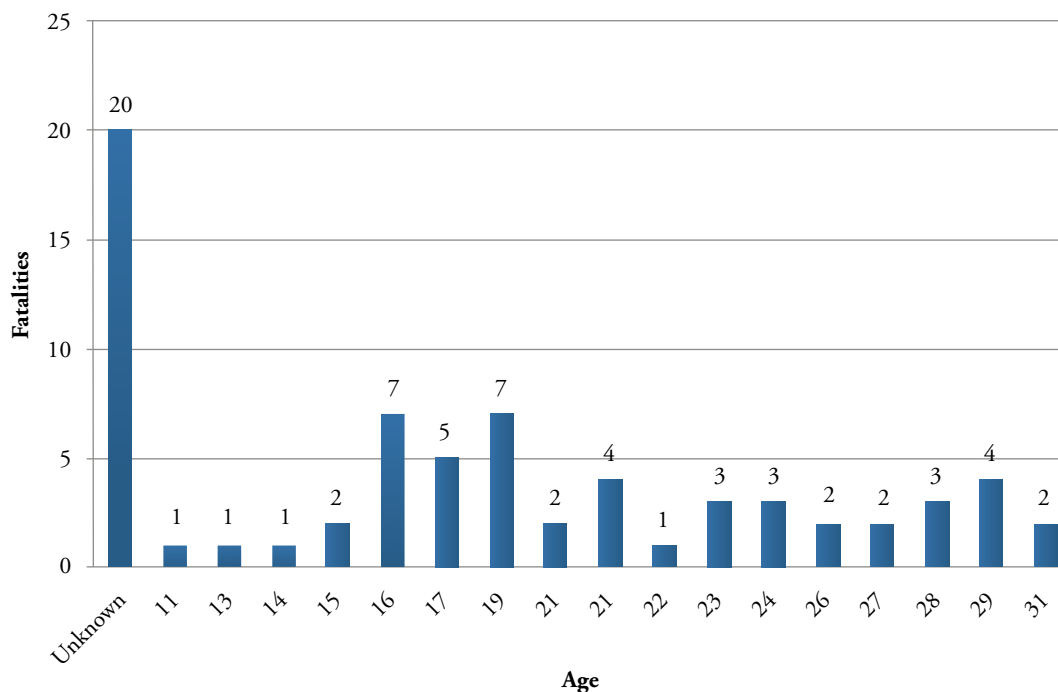


FIGURE 4 – Football-related fatalities by age.

From the 1990s onwards, the rapid expansion of the *torcidas organizadas* was accompanied by an increase in the rate of violence. Many of the new affiliates were young men aged between 12 and 18, who were allured by the lifestyle and symbolic capital that the *torcidas organizadas* offered them. In view of the crisis of representativeness of traditional institutions – such as political parties and labour unions – the *torcidas organizadas* have become an important source of identity, meaning and visibility for thousands of young men, who also consider them important forms of leisure and participation in the universe of the professional football. Nonetheless, belonging to a *torcida organizada* is not only limited to the simple formal affiliation. From the reflections by MOREIRA⁴⁷ and ZUCAL² on the Argentinean *hinchadas*, we can infer that for a new fan to be known, recognized, and thus respected by other fans, he must be fully committed to his team. He will have to follow the club everywhere, to always support the team and players (especially, in times of adversity), to travel with fans to away matches, to attend the headquarters of the club, to participate in the everyday and invisible “work” so as to win the symbolic battle against the rival fans, and, logically, to honour his crowd.

In this context, denying the physical support to the team or not putting his own life at risk in the

name of the *torcida organizada* symbolizes a quite questionable attitude, that is, an object of shame. Yet it does not happen only for the one who deserted the conflict. As a rock that falls into the water, the humiliation, here, has a ripple effect, which follows from the fugitive to the entire crowd, as it were a kind of symbolic contamination. As MOREIRA⁴⁷ states, the humiliation of a member of the *torcida organizada* stains the very honour of the other affiliates.

Given that, physical and verbal aggression has turned into an important code of conduct in the eyes of the members of the *torcidas organizadas*. In Argentina, for example, physical confrontations with rival fans or against the police constitute a form of action performed by some fans. By doing that, they can demonstrate that they possess “*aguante*”, i.e., the capacity to resist pain⁴⁸. The display of this capacity confers them honour and prestige within their group (*hinchada*). In this case, there exists a strong association between violence and masculinity, which rests on the logic of *aguante*⁴⁹. In Brazil, the *torcidas organizadas* are guided by a principle of masculinity quite similar to the Argentinean one^{20,50}. Therefore, we can infer that the engagement of some fans in violent actions can be determined by this association.

In the early 1990s, explosives and firearms became to be much more used by the crowds, what contributed to the appearance of violent incidents

in Brazilian football. In addition, confrontations between rival fan groups gradually became more organized and premeditated. At the same time, some *torcidas organizadas*, including Gaviões da Fiel, overtly distanced themselves from the violent events initiated by some of their members. Instead they emphasized the positive function they were supposed to have in Brazilian society^h. It is important to note here that the occurrence of violent confrontations should not be interpreted as a sign by which the *torcidas organizadas* have necessarily been synonymous with violence, as if violence were inherent to their appearance. Put differently, not every member of a *torcida organizada* engages in violent behaviour. Similarly, the fandom cannot be held responsible for the violence associated with *torcidas organizadas*. In fact, as some studies indicate⁷, only a minority of these fans have been implicated in violence. Additionally, the violent actions displayed by football fans (whether associated with *torcidas organizadas* or not) are not uniform. Rather, they may represent different degrees and types of violence (e.g. physical or symbolic violence).

In general, the role of the police and private security organizations is much more central and much more negative in Latin America than in most Western countries. In several Latin American societies, the police have a long history of violence against citizens, which has often been displayed on behalf of a repressive state⁵¹, leading also to extra-legal repression in the form of “death squads”⁵² or “police bandits”⁴¹. In the context of football, this role has remained most obvious in the fatalities resulting directly from bullets fired by police officers. Seven of the 70 reported fatalities (10%) are in this category. Moreover, concerning the people killed and wounded directly by police gunfire, ALABARCES⁴⁸ affirms that “one needs to add the systematically violent conduct of police in relation to match security” (p. 35). Besides the image of a hostile police force, there is the fact that the police has unwillingly accepted to take on responsibility for football events, since security for football matches is considered a “private matter” by Brazilian police forces. By explaining inter-fan violence in terms of crowd pathology, the police’s perceptions of football fans remove the role of the police in producing collective conflict. The rationale of the crowd and its internal dynamics may be considered as sufficient explanations in themselves⁵³. In view of that, football fans must be always strictly controlled, especially

considering the perceived “violent minority” of the *torcidas organizadas*.

This perception of the police’s role is problematic, as it minimizes the heterogeneousness behind the composition of football crowds, as well as the diverging attitudes towards the use of violence among its members, reducing them to a one-dimensional stereotype alone. Furthermore, it may profoundly influence fan attitudes towards the police. The *torcedores organizados* – the fanatic supporters of the organized groups – generally perceive the police as an ineffective, indiscriminately aggressive, unreliable and corrupt organization. It should be said that police strategies at football matches are mostly reactive and repressive, rather than being proactive and preventive practices⁹, which would rely mainly on forceful intervention that may escalate collective conflict, instead of inhibiting it.

This style of policing, together with the public perception thereof, is not particular to football matches. Yet it is part of a broader pattern of using the police as a force to maintain social order, rather than a force aimed to providing security or investigating crimes^{54,55}. The forces of law and order have been themselves one of the main agents of violence in many Brazilian cities³⁴. Several police forces in Brazil are plagued by corruption, entangled with organized crime, and thus accustomed to violent and illegal methods of action^{41,51,56}. Many Brazilians do not consider the police in terms of law, rights, and citizenship, but rather as a corrupt and immoral institution³⁴. This perception resides in a long history of state disrespect for civil rights and in a deep disbelief in the fairness of the justice system, including its ability to function without bias⁵⁷. Police abuses often go unpunished, which reflects the principle of impunity, a central feature of Brazilian society^{33,36}.

Locations of incidents and weapons used in football-related fatalities

As noted above, the evolution of football violence in Brazil should also be understood in light of the role played by agents of social control. An important element referring to this role is the intended and unanticipated effects of counter-measures aimed at containing crowd behaviour during professional football matches in Brazil. Following the rise in football-related violence from the 1990s onwards, state authorities started to introduce several “counter-measures”: the CCTV; the introduction

of compulsory identity cards for affiliates of *torcidas organizadas*; and the gradual modernization of football stadia. Nationally, the most important legal instrument to fight football violence is the *Estatuto de Defesa do Torcedor* (Federal Act 10.671/03) [“Sports Fan Statute”, in English]. In short, counter-measures have had some impact on the incidence of spectator violence inside football stadia in Brazil, at least in the short and in the medium term⁹¹³.

At the same time, anti-violence policies have displaced and transformed football violence to a great extent, instead of effectively reducing it over the years. Inter-fans conflicts have increasingly been moved into areas where controls are or are perceived by fans as being weak or even non-existent. Confrontations between rival fans are more and more organized and they often take place outside and away from the stadia, such as in surrounding streets, in public transport and at subway stations or at bus stations. Encounters are sometimes pre-arranged via mobile phones or using the internet.

Some inter-group rivalries have also been reproduced at basketball matches and during samba festivals. The most notorious incident occurred during the São Paulo carnival in February 2003. A 25-year-old man was shot straight in the head during a clash between São Paulo fans affiliated to the Torcida Tricolor Independente, together with members of the *torcida organizada*, and samba school Pavilhão⁹, which is associated with Corinthians. The incident occurred at the Anhembi Sambrome in the city of São Paulo. Later on, a fight broke out between members of Independente and the Palmeiras’ *torcida organizada* “Mancha Alverde”. In the end, two people were beaten to death⁵⁸.

The use of firearms is quite evident in reported football-related fatalities in Brazil. FIGURE 5 shows that, on average, 53% of deaths were caused by gunfire. In addition to these fatalities, there are several other recorded cases of inter-fan conflict involving guns. The use of firearms in football-related violence has been considerably more common in Brazil than in Western Europe, where inter-fan confrontations usually involve fist fighting, knives, bottles or sticks. In fact, using firearms in football-related violence is extremely rare in Western Europe²⁹. FROSDICK and NEWTON³¹ state that in England and Wales “the most likely use of weapons would seem to be the throwing of missiles such as bottles in the general direction of opposing fans or the police. Such missiles generally land on the ground and so are unlikely to result in injury”.

This striking cross-national difference can be explained by examining the issue of firearms possession in the Brazilian society. Both registered and unlawful gun possession has increased significantly since Brazil’s democratic transition and it may be closely related to the rise in drug-related crime, the expansion of private security and the feeling of power that the gun gives to men who use it as a tool for the exercise of power⁵⁹. The delegitimation of the rule of law along Brazilian social classes has led Brazilians to increasingly take the responsibility for their defence and personal safety, by using their own hands³⁴. The increase in the number of gun possession licenses associates with the fact that a higher proportion of homicides are performed with personal guns. Today, Brazil is the country having the highest rate of firearm involvement in homicides. Almost 70% of all homicides involve a firearm. The relative ease by which firearms can be possessed in Brazil remains a particular concern.

An alternative explanation is that moral assessments and the meanings ascribed to football violence may be changing. Here, data from the Argentinean case can help us again. In this country, the number of deaths involving fans committed by firearms increased significantly in the 1990s, and it has increased even further in recent years¹. This increase appears to be associated to the new social status that the use of firearms has had. According to MOREIRA⁴⁷, the former members of the Argentinean *hinchadas* condemned (at least, discursively) the use of such weapons. In order for *hinchas* to show *aguante*, it was necessary to face the rival fans through physical confrontation. The use of firearms was not considered legitimate for this purpose. It would only be justified in two instances: to defend the patrimony of the crowd (such as flags and banners) and as a last resort to defend one’s life – e.g., in case a fan is ambushed by various rival fans. Nowadays, physical confrontation remains still the most legitimate way to show *aguante*. However, using firearms in inter-fan conflicts is also a practice of the struggle to achieve symbolic capital. Therefore, the use of guns does not put in question their “masculinity”.

In Brazil, conflicts with firearms also seem to be very controversial. In 2012, for example, fans from Palmeiras and Corinthians embarked on inter-fan confrontation some hours local derby, along an avenue in the Northern bairro of São Paulo. Two Palmeiras fans were shot and killed. In the next game between these clubs, the ‘Mancha Alverde’ from Palmeiras took banners to the stadia in order to draw a huge

mosaic in protest against the use of firearms. More than a message for peace, the mosaic was a claim that inter-fan conflicts should be conducted through physical confrontation. An example of this claim is that while exhibiting such mosaic, Palmeiras's fans

addressed songs to Corinthians' fans inviting them to fight "hand-to-hand". Nevertheless, we need further studies to investigate if a change of attitude regarding the use of firearms by the most violent sectors of the *torcidas organizadas* actually occurs.

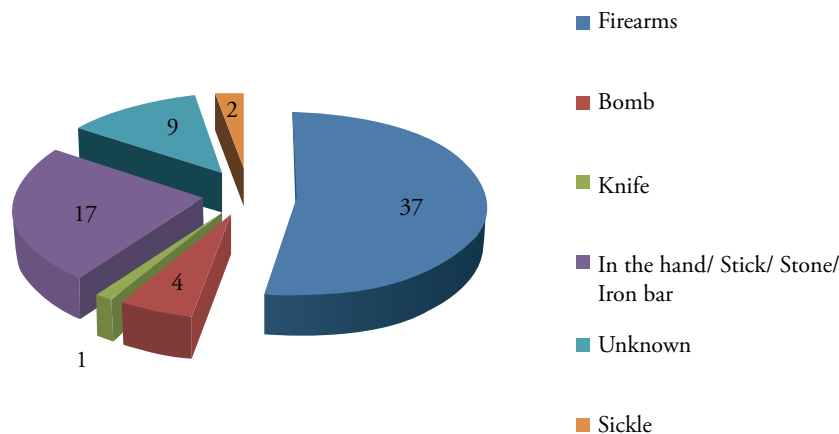


FIGURE 5 – Use of weapons (n = 70).

By analysing the football-related fatalities in Brazil, the purpose of the study was to describe and analyse the extent and the nature of deaths related to the football scene in Brazil. As we suggested here, fatalities constitute only one factor among several other variables that must be considered. Separately, our results can lead to misinterpretations, as the belief according to which there existed no case of physical violence in the Brazilian football before 1967. For this reason, our purpose here was to indicate some historical studies that could complement our current analysis, in order to avoid misunderstandings. Although partial and incomplete, the journalistic sources of these studies reveal the existence of conflicts already in the early twentieth century. Recognizing the limitations of our work, we consider that it can help relevant social agents by offering them an opportunity to develop and to rethink on security policies in sports. First of all, these actors need to consider that today many inter-fan confrontations take place away from the stadia, featuring a type of organization that requires a refocusing of police functions in relation to intelligence. It should also be noted that a significant proportion of football-related fatalities are caused by the use of firearms, a fact that suggests the need for greater rigor for the authorities to control access to guns.

In addition, it is worth remembering that aggressive or disproportionate actions by police forces can increase – rather than diminish – violence among spectators. This suggests that greater police specialization and education is required in order to promote a paradigm change when dealing with football fans. The pathologization of spectator behaviour – as if it were irrational and violent by definition – has only served to legitimize and fuel repressive and violent measures against football spectators whose civil liberties may often be not safeguarded. Finally, we should not lose sight of the fact that, despite the persistence of football-related violence, the vast majority of football fans are non-violent, and the *torcidas organizadas* in which they participate are an important source of identity, leisure and political participation for thousands of young people. Organized groups of football fans are citizens and should be treated as such. In this respect, we would advocate the establishment of new strategies of engagement and dialogue with fans, instead of further amplifying the legal control measures and the penalization targeted at them. To promote the pacification of Brazilian football, we should not accept measures that may contribute to the criminalization, discrimination and exclusion of any social group.

Resumo

Dor e sofrimento no futebol: análise de fatalidades relacionadas ao futebol no Brasil

Neste artigo, objetivamos descrever e analisar a extensão e a natureza das mortes relacionados ao espetáculo de futebol no Brasil. Para isso, utilizamos e cruzamos dados de diferentes fontes – pesquisa de campo, livros acadêmicos, relatórios do Ministério da Justiça e sites de associações de segurança e de grandes revistas e jornais brasileiros – entre 1967–2012. Concluímos que a distribuição geográfica dessas mortes está diretamente relacionada ao “peso” de cada região brasileira. Observamos também que a maioria dessas mortes se originou de confrontos entre torcedores e em conflitos com a polícia, causados pela adoção de estratégias reativas e repressivas pela polícia. Além disso, ressaltamos que muitas das mortes ocorreram fora dos estádios e envolveram o uso de armas de fogo, como resultado do fácil acesso a essas armas e, possivelmente, por uma mudança de atitude dos grupos mais violentos quanto ao seu uso.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Violência; Futebol; Mortes; Torcidas organizadas.

Notes

- a. A rare exception is the research that raised the deaths of Brazilian football fans between 1999 and 2008⁸. Another exception is the study carried out by NERY⁴, which raised the number of deaths in Brazilian football between 1992 and March 2012. Our survey, however, differs from these two. First, because we analyse a much larger period of time. Second, because the methodology used was different. Nery, for example, is limited to the analysis of materials published in the media. As we will see ahead, from our point of view, this can be a problem. Because of this, we also use other sources. Moreover, we want to point out that many of the issues discussed herein are also unpublished, such as the one related to moral disputes about the use of firearms in the Brazilian context.
- b. Mancha-Verde became defunct in 1995 after some of its members entered into conflict with members of Torcida Independente, of São Paulo. In 1997, the fan group was re-established as Mancha Alviverde⁵.
- c. Our decision to work within this specific period was informed by the fact that 1967 was the first year in which a football-related fatality was reported in Brazil.
- d. These were made between the years of 1994 and 1998 – the stadia ‘Brinco de Ouro da Princesa’ (Campinas, SP), ‘Parque Antártica’ (São Paulo, SP), ‘Vila Belmiro’ (Santos, SP); ‘Morumbi’ (São Paulo, SP); ‘Pacaembu’ (São Paulo, SP) between 2007 and 2009 during the Brazilian Football Championship and the Brazil Cup.
- e. The sites analysed are: O Estado de S. Paulo (<http://www.estadao.com.br/>); Folha de S.Paulo (www.folha.uol.com.br/); O Globo (<http://oglobo.globo.com/>); Jornal do Brasil (<http://www.jb.com.br/>); Agora São Paulo (<http://www.agora.uol.com.br/>); ISTOÉ (<http://www.istoe.com.br/capa/>); UOL (www.uol.com.br/); Globo (www.globo.com/); Terra (<http://www.terra.com.br/portal/>); SaferNet (<http://www.safernet.org.br/site/>); AchaNotícias (<http://www.achanoticias.com.br/>); Globo Esporte (<http://globoesporte.globo.com/>); Hoje em Dia (<http://www.hojeemdia.com.br/>); Jornal Opção (<http://www.jornalopcao.com.br/>) and Lance!Net (<http://www.lancenet.com.br/>). In order to facilitate the information search on football-related fatalities on these sites, we used the available search engines. The search terms and descriptors used in these search engines varied according to the organization of each system.
- f. Twenty-seven of those deaths, according to our findings, are of members of *torcidas organizadas*. Seven of them were under age (between 15 and 17 years); four had unidentified age in the reports and sixteen were aged between 19 and 31 years, with five of these being 19 years old, age at which there is a higher incidence of fatalities among the dead members belonging to *torcidas organizadas*.
- g. Here, it is important to note that during the same period some fan groups had also emerged in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and some groups had already called themselves as “*torcidas organizadas*”. In the city of São Paulo, some groups had preferred to name themselves “*torcidas uniformizadas*”. However, these groups resembled more the *Charangas* than the current *torcidas organizadas* do today⁴⁴.
- h. One of the differences between the *torcidas organizadas* and the British hooligans resides precisely in the fact that the *torcidas organizadas* do not stand out by their deliberate transgression or by the anonymity, even if some of their actions follow this

path. On the contrary, the *torcidas organizadas* seek generally to be recognized as representative and legitimate institutions of their teams. In addition, unlike the hooligans, most of these fans embody a legal entity, with directors, deliberative council and periodic elections for President. This entity also has links to the other *torcidas organizadas*. These links are not limited to strategic alliances against the opponents. Yet they aim at the exchange of travel support and infrastructure. It has its own headquarters, where barbecues, parties and meetings are promoted. It provides flags, musical instruments, pyrotechnical artifacts and its members wear clothes that identify them as fans. Finally, the *torcida organizada* has no ties with extreme right-wing parties and/or ideological nationalist projects (though it is important to note that many hooligans also do not have them)^{5,21}.

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