



# Together, but Still Apart: Class Positions and Identities among Football Fans in Cluj-Napoca, Romania

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## Abstract

Drawing on an ethnographic research among Hungarian and Romanian football fans in Cluj-Napoca the current paper presents the ways in which subjective and ethnicized understandings of class shape the identities and allegiances of these fans. In a context characterized by a high degree of groupness<sup>1</sup> such understandings contribute to situationally define and redefine the principles of solidarity as well as those of exclusion. Besides ethnicity, the basic principle of division among football these fan groups, identities ranging from local affiliations to the club and the city to national identifications are mobilized in various moments to downplay existing or perceived tensions. I look particularly at such moments to explore the relation between class and identity.

## Introduction

The 2007/2008 football season will certainly be remembered in Cluj-Napoca. It is the kind of event that football enthusiasts would “tell their grandchildren about”. It is such an event that makes players “heroes” and allows the fans to proudly say: “I was there and saw it all!”. At the end of the season C.F.R. made “the event” or the double by winning both the Romanian National Championship and the Romanian Cup. By all means C.F.R.’s success came as a big surprise. Their triumph ended the Bucharest based clubs’ (Steaua, Dinamo, Rapid) hegemony over the championship that saw them winning it uninterruptedly for the last seventeen years. Regionally, C.F.R.’s success brought the supreme national title in a Transylvanian town after thirty eight years that have passed since U.T.A. Arad’s last win in the 1969/1970 season. Even

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<sup>1</sup> Brubaker, Rogers. 2002. Ethnicity Without Groups. *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 43, No. 2, p. 163-189.



locally it was not Universitatea, the “traditional” and the most prestigious Cluj based club, to succeed at the national level, but the less well known and performance lacking, in spite of its one hundred years history, C.F.R. that has finally made it. More to that the stake involved in winning the Romanian football championship was never as high as in the 2007/2008 season. The good performances of the Romanian clubs in European competitions during the previous seasons permitted the 2008 winner to be directly admitted in the Champions League group phase, the most important European club football competition, where just the participation insures a profit ranging between eight to ten million Euros.

Although founded in 1907 by Hungarian railroad workers, C.F.R.’s ascendance started only in the 2000/2001 season when a Hungarian businessman started big investments in the club. In four years the team moved from the third to the first Romanian division where soon became a contender for the top places. Not just the performances of the club, but also its player policy marked a change in the world of Romanian football. On a stage dominated until recently by Romanian players C.F.R. came to sign mainly foreigners, being the first Romanian football club to take full advantage of the European football regulations regarding the labor force migration. By 2006 the club already had more Portuguese players than Romanians, closely followed by Argentineans. Now their usual line-up rarely sees more than two Romanians on the pitch. The goalkeeping post is disputed among a Canadian, a Portuguese and a Romanian. The defensive is truly multinational: Portuguese, Swedish, French, Romanian and Ivorian players claiming the four available titular spots. The midfield and the offensive is a Latin business at C.F.R.: alongside Romanians, Portuguese, Argentinean and Brazilian players look for a chance to score. This ethnically heterogeneous map is completed in the stands where both Romanians and Hungarians jointly support the team.

The growing success of C.F.R. shook the establishment of Cluj-Napoca’s football scene, long dominated by the team of Universitatea, the University’s club, founded in 1919 by Romanian medical students and teachers. The emergence of C.F.R. as a successful sporting club powerfully influenced the town’s fandom, traditionally coalesced around Universitatea. I argue that the polarization of fandom in Cluj-Napoca followed both the ethnic and class divisions that have historically marked the town. Thus, football fandom in Cluj presents itself as a site where ethnic and class contentions are played out and the two stadiums represent a public space mobilized to express such contradictions.



In order to understand the actual configuration of this social space a retrospective look is needed to trace the class and ethnic dynamics that have historically shaped the town as well as to understand the actions and decisions of the C.F.R. fans, both Hungarian and Romanian, and their relation with the club after the year 2000 when the investment and the reconstruction of the club started. I think that this is a necessary step in order to find out how class and ethnicity came to shape the relations between the supporters of the two clubs in Cluj and those between the Romanian and Hungarian followers of C.F.R., where ethnicity accounts for the organizational divide among the latter club's fans. More to that, this incursion in the recent past can offer some clues about the moments when ethnicity is the primary mode of identification among these fans and when it is not, being superseded by other identifying categories such as civic or sporting ones.

The main contribution regarding the ethnic relations in the town of Cluj-Napoca is provided by Brubaker and his colleagues (see Brubaker, 2006). The authors present a history of the “nationalist politics” that have marked the region of Transylvania and the town, before moving to investigate the “everyday ethnicity” of Cluj through an analysis of the daily interactions of the ordinary Clujeni (Brubaker, 2006). By focusing on everyday interaction and the use of language Brubaker sets out to show ethnicity, defined as a “discursive resource” (2006, p. 169), works on a daily basis among Hungarians and Romanians in Cluj-Napoca. This perspective is legitimized through a critique of what Brubaker calls “groupism” or “the tendency to take internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups [...] as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis” (2006, p. 7). The methodological consequence of this approach is a preoccupation with isolated cases, narratives produced by individuals, where ethnicity might or might not surface as a relevant category among many others like class, age or gender, which remain largely unexplored.

In contrast, the present study is an ethnographical investigation of the ways in which class and ethnicity work in Cluj-Napoca in the context of football fandom. Characterized, in Brubaker's terms, by a high “degree of groupness” these fan-clubs provide us with the chance to expand the discussion of ethnicity in Cluj in a twofold manner: first, it allows us to show how ethnic contentions at the level of the city are underlined by class tensions and second, for the case of C.F.R.'s fans, to present how civic and sporting means of identification surpass ethnicity as the primary building block of one's identity. This means widening the concept of ethnic identity to



incorporate not only a discursive dimension, but also to account for the specificities of a historically constituted social formation (Hall, 1996). In the case of Cluj, the socialist industrialization and urbanization produced lasting class divisions, often interpreted in ethnic terms.

The scholarly literature engaging the issue of football fandom presents it as a site where ethnic and class distinctions are powerfully amplified to sustain relations of rivalry and opposition (Armstrong and Giulianotti, 2001, Dunning, 1998, Giulianotti, 1999). I argue that the interclub relations in Cluj-Napoca between the followers of Universitatea and C.F.R. do follow this pattern, while the latter's club fans, although ethnically different, find means of creating a unitary following for the club. In this sense groups of football fans present themselves as key sites to study the junctures between ethnicity and class.

The first step will be to trace the processes that have shaped the present context for the football fans in Cluj-Napoca. In other words, I try to provide an answer to the following questions: first, how did the developments in ethnic and class relations contribute towards transforming Cluj-Napoca into a "two-club city" (Giulianotti, 1999)? Second, how did the emergence of C.F.R. as a powerful football club influence the world of fandom in Cluj? Third, what accounts for the present organizational divide of C.F.R. fans among ethnic lines?

Giulianotti argues that some of the most intense rivalries between football fans appear when two clubs represent the same city, contestations from the opposite sides regard the right to stand for the city and which club was more successful in doing so throughout its history. Given the fact that the two important football clubs in Cluj-Napoca, C.F.R. and Universitatea, have a long history<sup>2</sup> one might argue that the city was a two-club one since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But if we take into account the results and the popular appeal of the two clubs, at least for the post-War period, Universitatea was by far the representative football club for the town of Cluj-Napoca. C.F.R.'s recent success changed the whole setting of football fandom in Cluj.

I argue that this is the outcome of a mix between economic interests and nationalist politics at the city level. On the one hand, during the 1990's the football industry in Romania came to be seen as an attractive investment, accompanying a process taking place all around

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<sup>2</sup> C.F.R. club (abbreviation for Romanian Railways) traces its history to K.V.S.C. (Kolozsvári Vasutas Sport Club) founded in 1907; Universitatea (University) was founded in 1919.



Western Europe. On the other hand, the same period was marked by a nationalist political discourse and political action, at the city level, emphasizing the Romanian character of the city, and degrading its Hungarian past and present. In this context, when a Hungarian businessman tried to invest at Universitatea (very much perceived as a symbol of Romanianness in Cluj-Napoca) the city hall denied his bid. By reorienting his investment to C.F.R. (a club often associated with the Hungarian minority in Cluj-Napoca) the basis for the success of the club was thus created and a new space for football enthusiasts emerged in Cluj-Napoca.

In the present study I argue that the C.F.R. football club, through its improving results and enhanced quality of play, managed to attract mainly Romanian middle-class football enthusiasts, many of them disappointed by the ultras<sup>3</sup> style adopted by the Universitatea fans during the 1990's, the majority of the latter having a working-class background. They tended to adopt a politically correct posture toward minorities, one that puts an emphasis on difference and diversity, probably as a reaction against the sometimes extreme nationalist discourse adopted by the Romanian local political leaders and by Universitatea's fans. The strategies used by the Hungarian fans of C.F.R. to downplay their ethnic affiliations meant a recognition of the Romanianness of Cluj-Napoca's public space and contributed to assuming shared, rather than opposed, means of identification alongside the Romanians in the stands. Out of these two processes a social space can be defined that accommodates both the performing of different ethnicities as well as it allows different groups to act together, this collective action being able to integrate the contradictions between them.

A clarification of the already introduced theoretical notions is in point, before moving to analyze Cluj-Napoca's "soccerscape" (Giulianotti, 1999). In the first section I critically engage the concept of "identity", "ethnicity", "class" and "fandom" in order to render them operational for an investigation of football related phenomena. In the second section I first address the town's historically constituted social configuration and assess its impact on football fandom. Then I go on to discuss the case of C.F.R.'s ethnically distinct supporters and the identitarian means they have employed to reduce the possible ethnic frictions among them.

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<sup>3</sup> Podaliri and Balestri (in Brown, 1998a) see ultras as a youth subculture, the elements that offer specificity to ultras fans are: occupying the ends of the stadium, the tendency for violence towards rivals, the use of drums, banners and smoke creating devices when supporting their favorites, frequent meetings between members in order to plan their next actions.



## Shifting Loyalties

The transformations in Cluj-Napoca's football scene that have culminated in C.F.R.'s success have been accompanied by powerful modifications in the support structure of the town's two football clubs. Cluj-Napoca's "soccerscape" (Giulianotti, 1999) is particularly worth studying precisely because of these rapid developments and transformations. In a few years the town envisioned both the decline of a traditional club and the ascendance of an unexpected contender, experienced the emergence of a strong football rivalry, witnessed episodes of violence, all in a context marked by ethnic and class divisions. Taking into account that football fandom is a site where principles of social differentiation such as ethnicity, class, local and regional affiliations are taken up and played out (Dunning, 1998; Giulianotti, 1999), the main argument advanced in this section is that the ascendance of C.F.R. provided a new category of identification for football fans in Cluj-Napoca. The loyalties and passions coalescing around this category are not exclusively determined by the club's recent sporting performances, but can be better understood by taking into account the town's ethnic and class background and the whole discourse surrounding these social differences. In this sense, the space of the football stadium can be best understood as a public space mobilized to express ethnic and class contentions at the level of the town in terms of football fandom.

Throughout the socialist and post-socialist period, up to the year 2000, Universitatea attracted the support of all the football enthusiasts in Cluj. With its home ground, the "Ion Moina" stadium, located near the town center, developed in the 1960's to accommodate more than 30.000 people, and backed up by the University, to which the club was affiliated until the fall of communism and remaining symbolically attached to the academic institution even after it came to be owned and managed by the city hall, for its passionate supporters Universitatea's uniqueness in representing the town of Cluj gained an aura of permanence. On the other hand, C.F.R.'s story as a club is marked by its attempts to financially survive. Changing its name seven times throughout its history and being several times on the point of disappearing, the club played mainly in the second and third Romanian divisions. The turning point came in the 2000/2001 season when a Hungarian businessman from Cluj bought, after a failed bid for Universitatea, the C.F.R. club and announced highly ambitious plans.



The story of the investment made by this businessman at C.F.R. after the failed attempt to take over Universitatea was, and partly still is, surrounded in mystery. Only recently has the current owner of C.F.R. decided to publicly engage the issue, recognizing in 2008 that he had first considered buying Universitatea, but “the transaction was not possible”<sup>4</sup>. The information was a common place among the town’s football fans who point towards his ethnic identity and his involvement in Hungarian firms to account for the failure of the bid for Universitatea. The person managing the relation between the fans and the club at Universitatea, a 35 year old car dealer, commented that:

I don’t know if you know this, but P. first wanted to invest at Universitatea. The people in the city hall did not want him to control the club. [...] There is also an ethnic issue here. If you now look at C.F.R.’s sponsors: you have P., you have Energobit who are also Hungarians, you have (?) Invest also Hungarians, so there is an ethnic issue... What can I say, their ascent is somewhat disturbing for the rich people in town, because all the others have allied against P. I don’t know if you know, at the auction for the new mall P. should have won judging the bid he made, but the City Hall and the Local Council gave the work to D. just to show that P. cannot buy everything, he had already bought the land to build Polus [a Hungary-based chain of mall’s].

Andrei, (35), Universitatea fan

C.F.R.’s fans are equally aware of the importance of this moment stressing the large financial stakes involved in controlling Universitatea. One of C.F.R.’s followers resumed the whole situation in the following terms:

The local council is not interested to sell the club [Universitatea], they are always talking about an investment, but the big interest, everyone knows, is the stadium, located right in the city center. N. [president of the city’s council] was already dreaming of mall’s there. I don’t even want to think about the price of the land there, and because of all these interests the club was destroyed. From this point of view I am sorry that P. did not go at Universitatea, it would have been better for Cluj, certainly not for C.F.R., but for Cluj, they would have attracted 30000-40000 people in the stadium at any time, we still have to work for that for some years.

Marius, (31), C.F.R. fan

Both the ethnic and economic arguments should be placed in the wider frame of local nationalist politics. At the time when the investment was made the town was dominated by a powerful nationalist discourse mainly advanced and sustained by Cluj-Napoca’s mayor (see

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<sup>4</sup> Information available in Romanian at: <http://www.prosport.ro/fotbal-intern/liga-1/paszpany-cand-am-intrat-in-fotbal-vroiam-sa-cumpar-u-cluj-2620117>. Webpage accessed on 04.06.2008.



Brubaker, 2006; Faje, 2007). In economic terms this meant a strong opposition towards foreign capital, especially the one perceived as serving Hungarian interests. The expression “We are not selling our country!” used by the mayor and many other Romanian politicians become a daily joke that reminds the inhabitants of Cluj about this period.

The events that followed this investment take the form of a paradox: Universitatea, perceived as the club of intellectuals and students, came more and more to be supported by young, working class people coming from Cluj-Napoca’s socialist-built neighborhoods, while C.F.R., at least traditionally seen as the club of workers and Hungarians from Cluj, came to attract the support of more middle-aged and roughly middle-class fans, both Romanian and Hungarian. At the level of discourse the town’s class divisions are hidden behind and interpreted through the urban/rural distinction, especially by the old Clujeni. This distinction has a durable spatial correspondence in the divide between the old town of Cluj and the more recently built socialist neighborhoods (Lazăr, 2002). As Brubaker (2006) notes, the process of urbanization was also perceived in ethnicized terms: as a threat towards its Hungarianness, because of the large numbers of Romanians coming to the city. For football fans the place of one’s residence came to tell much about his club allegiances, as well as regarding his ethnic identity, class position and possible idiosyncratic behavior. The leader of K.V.S.C., the group of mainly Hungarian fans of C.F.R., a 38 year old actor, provides a typical story of the ways in which the old urbanites perceive the transformations of both the town and its football clubs:

During the 1990s I was also going to Universitatea’s matches, because they are also a team from Cluj and I never imagined that there could be so much hate between the supporters of the two teams, to be honest such a thing would have been unthinkable. This all started since their fans radicalized. I know very well many of U’s old fans, whom I still meet and talk to. But these people were slowly pushed aside by some newcomers, a second generation of people coming from the other side of the Carpathians [Moldavia region], now living in the marginal neighborhoods: Iris, Groapa, Manastur. Everybody knows why these neighborhoods were built: for the people who were brought using force or sometimes with their consent, during the 1960s and 1970s, in Cluj-Napoca to fill the jobs in factories. Unfortunately, at Universitatea these people came to weigh heavily and I have very good friends, old Universitatea fans, who now have to stay on the other side of the stands, not to meet with this ones. Among old fans the problem of whether you are a U fan or C.F.R. fan does not arise.

Laszlo, (38), C.F.R. fan

On the other hand, the newcomers to the city are equally aware of their marginal position and use similar distinctions when it comes to defining their place in the city. As the narrative of



the former leader of Universitatea's fans, a 29 year old house painter and bodyguard of a night club, shows fandom provides a sense of commonality for these people, able to attenuate the difficulties of living in an insecure social environment:

Here, I don't know... Here in Groapă, where U.C.G. – Ultra Curva Groapa was born in '97, it seems that we are a bit, a bit worse, more aggressive, but we are also more united, we are like in a village at the town's periphery, people are more worried, they are poorer. We are different than the other citizens of Cluj. Here in Groapa we are a small neighborhood, we are very united, more beautiful... and as soon as we get out to another town or to the stadium we are close to each other... if the gendarme wants to take one of us, he can't do it, the others are immediately all over him; we all eat from the same bread, if we have money, everything we have we calculate so that there is enough for everyone, so it is nice if you come to think about it, it's like a big family.

Marcu, (29), Universitatea fan

C.F.R.'s recent performances are perceived as an attempt to represent the city of Cluj-Napoca at the national level, which in football's competitive logic directly means downplaying Universitatea's "right" to do so. What this calls for is a reinterpretation of the history of the two clubs where the nationalistic argument ranks prominently and legitimizes Universitatea's supremacy, in spite of C.F.R.'s sporting performances. In this sense, the nationalist discourse empowers more marginal people to claim the right over the city through football fandom:

They [C.F.R.] do not have a tradition and, in the first place, they've started their history badly... During the Second World War – I'm not chauvinistic, I'm a Romanian and I'm proud – so, in the Second World War, Universitatea Cluj, when you say Universitatea Cluj is something beautiful, went in exile to Sibiu and played football in the Romanian championship, this is something beautiful to play in the Second... we were somebody... we were worthy of respect, the whole country respected us and even now they still do... But they stayed in Cluj and took a Hungarian name, KV... I don't know what Koložsvár, it's a shame, it's a shame, it's a shame! And now you come to say that you're the soul of Ardeal, you can't, whom do you fool.

Marcu, (29), Universitatea fan

Football's capacity to arouse strong local affiliations and its contribution in building urban solidarities (Giulianotti, 1999) was certainly noticed and used by local politicians both during the continuous labor force migration to the city from the surrounding rural areas that started under communism in the 1960s as well as in the electoral campaigns that came to be organized after 1989. It was precisely in this first period that the "Ion Moina" stadium was modernized and enlarged. As all of my aged informants mention, Universitatea's matches attracted large numbers of football enthusiasts, although the means of expression were severely controlled (Faje, 2007).



Today, both Universitatea's and C.F.R.'s followers remember the former club's matches where they would all go. Andrei, a 35 year old car seller, mentioned:

I'm going to U's [Universitatea's] matches since the '80s. During the communist time there were no other preoccupations, in the sense that everyone knew: the TV program was very short and the stadium would get full, full, but the people would not take part in supporting the team: the fan groups (*galeriile*) were very small.

Andrei, (35), Universitatea fan

C.F.R.'s older fans also acknowledge their participation, mainly as spectators, at Universitatea's home matches, strongly emphasizing the differences between "how it used to be" and "how it is now" and reinterpret the events in the light of the currently existing rivalry. While Universitatea ranked prominently as the town's major club, the categories of identification among football fans saw a complete merging between being from Cluj (*clujean*) and supporting Universitatea. The notes of one of Universitatea's former trainers illustrate precisely this merging of categories, up to the point of indistinction. Writing about the period of the "Vienna Diktat", during the Second World War, when Cluj was again part of Hungary he remembers:

In the time of the exile we played in Turda against "Victoria" Cluj, a refugee here. Before the game we went up the hill and looked over Cluj. You could see it as in your hand and we all cried. Just to get back and play once more there for "U"!...

For everybody and for each one, "U" was Cluj and Cluj was "U"!

I am from "U", meant I was from Cluj; simple and with no other possibility. (Carjan, 2004, p.11)

The nationalization of Cluj-Napoca's public space after 1989 is well documented by Brubaker (2006), but the author does not go on to explain precisely to which social categories the nationalist rhetoric was more appealing. Posed in Stuart Hall's terms, this problem can be reformulated as to find out which socially constituted subjects in Cluj-Napoca identified themselves most powerfully with the Romanian nationalist discourse. Football fandom is a key site to explore such questions in that it mobilizes around historically constituted clubs a whole array of symbols, discourses and ideas which are in turn more or less publicly displayed and expressed. Already Lazăr (2003) noticed the affinities between the Romanian newcomers to the city and the nationalist discourse of the town's mayor, most visible in their voting behavior. As the banner displayed by Universitatea's fans during the game against C.F.R. also shows, the football rivalry in Cluj-Napoca has by now become strongly ethnicized. For the mainly young, working-class man following Universitatea Cluj-Napoca is depicted as a Romanian city, whose



inhabitants are saddened by the club's lack of success, while only the Hungarians, in this case pointing towards C.F.R.'s followers, can enjoy the latter club's success.

The current discussion of "ethnicity" among football fans should not be understood in an essentialist, reified manner as a competition between two stable, deeply rooted ethnic identities, namely the Hungarian and the Romanian ones. In spite of the powerful emotional response often aroused by these categories in everyday life, the social positionality of the subjects involved in terms of their class should make us aware of the multiplicity of discourses, ideas and feelings that exclusive ethnic categories are made to cover. In this sense Hall's (1996b) notion of "ethnicities" is more adequate in order to understand the ethnicization of football fandom in Cluj-Napoca. While for the Hungarians that used to assist at Universitatea's matches the ethnic slogans and, for two of my subjects, direct confrontations with other fans regarding their ethnic identity provided sufficient reasons to make them quit this club definitively, for the Romanian fans that passionately started supporting C.F.R., class sensibilities were much more pregnant in their initial decision. The latter, after acknowledging the transformations that took place among Universitatea's fans, strongly denounce their both verbally and sometimes physically violent behavior, usually defined as *ultras* (see Podaliri and Balestri, 1998) or hooliganism. As one of my informants, a 48 year old unit manager at a multinational insurance company mentioned describing the main goals of the C.F.R. fans: "We are a fan-group which tries to create the conditions for the family to have a good time in the stands. This is directly related to our fight against hooliganism, against indecency in the stadium and so on." When presenting the differences between the followers of the two clubs, although biased towards his own group, the same fan illustrates the ways in which social differences are interpreted and used against rivals:

And if at us [at C.F.R.] we gathered a group of quite moderated people, unfortunately, on the other side [of the river, at Universitatea], there are characters which I cannot evaluate... I disqualify myself if I talk more about them... If we only talk about their leader... an individual that has nothing to do with the notion of human value, generally, no more than last week, most probably himself, was involved in the savage beating of a C.F.R. fan and around him has gathered a group of losers (*fără căpătâi*), I'm afraid that they are also lacking a minimal education... people who do not even know what team spirit means.

Marian, 48 years old, C.F.R. fan

The Hungarian followers of C.F.R. that used to at least watch Universitatea's matches have consistently mentioned that "nationalistic" slogans directed against Hungarians came to be used on the "Ion Moina" stadium around the year 2000. They also acknowledge that this



happened as soon as the younger people, coming from “the neighborhoods” came to dominate the group of Universitatea’s fans. Andras, a player at Universitatea in the 1980s, currently the regional manager over distribution at a multinational company, remembers that he first took the slogans as a joke, but he never went again after two guys confronted him with the words: “Hey Hungarian (*ungure*) you don’t belong here! You’d better stay at home!”. These words coming from some “filthy kids” convinced him that it is not worth opposing them and made him appreciate even more the newly emerging group of fans at C.F.R.

Thus a polarization of the existing football fandom in Cluj-Napoca along ethnic and class lines emerged since the ascendance of C.F.R. The fans coalescing around this club defined themselves in sharp contrast with Universitatea’s followers. Depicting them as uneducated and violent allowed them to perceive themselves as “civilized”, promoting a type of fandom more suited for the city of Cluj. Denouncing Universitatea’s fans nationalistic ideas opened up a space for C.F.R. fans to affirm themselves as “good citizens”, the promoters of a politically correct attitude towards minorities. I now turn to investigate the ways in which ethnic, civic and sporting modes of identification worked among C.F.R.’s fans to produce a unitary following for the club.

## Conclusions

The dynamic football scene in Cluj-Napoca, Romania provided a key site to explore the ways in which ethnicity and class work in the world of football fandom. The emergence of C.F.R. football club as an apt contender at the national level and its rapid success, culminating at the end of the 2007/2008 when the club won both the Romanian national championship and the Romanian Cup, coupled with the poor performances of Universitatea, the town’s better known club, provided the football enthusiasts in Cluj the opportunity to support yet another team. I argued that the lines along which the fans polarized, to support either C.F.R. or Universitatea, and the rivalry that appeared out of this split can’t be understood by taking into account only C.F.R.’s increasing performances. The current social composition of the two fan groups shows that the divisions that have historically marked the city of Cluj-Napoca came to be reproduced in the stands. Thus Universitatea came to be supported mainly by young, Romanian, working-class men, while C.F.R. was more appealing for more middle-aged and roughly middle-class fans, Romanian as well as Hungarian. The space of the two stadiums in Cluj became a public space



mobilized to express ethnic and class contentions in terms of football fandom.

The interplay between ethnicity and class in the world of football fandom stresses the importance of the processes taking place beyond the realm of sport in mobilizing support, creating passions, arousing emotions and contesting established ideas. In this sense, football and its related activities should not be understood as a distinct domain of social reality, but rather as sites where principles of social differentiation are constantly played with and played out. As this research shows, the social and cultural cleavages that mark the city of Cluj were taken up by football fans and used to identify themselves as well as others. The problem of identification in an ethnically mixed town raised the question regarding the salience of ethnicity in the everyday relations between football fans.

By focusing on the interactions between the Hungarian and Romanian followers of C.F.R., I was able to show that ethnicity, operating among people with a similar middle-class background, is not the sole modality of identification used by these fans. In contrast with other locations where ethnicity played a key role in the establishment and maintenance of football rivalries, C.F.R.'s fandom in Cluj-Napoca provides a site where civic and club affiliations have downplayed the role of ethnicity in establishing opposing relations to such an extent that ethnically different individuals came to support the same club. While the dominant position of the Romanian majority does play a key role in ethnically defining and demarcating the urban public space, local means of identification have decisively worked to create a sense of commonality among otherwise ethnically distinct individuals. More generally, the force of local identities in forging a sense of common belonging among C.F.R.'s football fans tells us much regarding the social divisions that shape Cluj-Napoca's social space. The civic distinctions between the "old Clujeni" and the late "newcomers" to the town, largely reproducing at the discursive level actual class divisions, powerfully structure the urban social space. Ethnicity is thus not the sole principle of differentiation and identification, but only one among others jointly operating to produce particular types of identities.

The theoretical implications of the findings presented in this paper are twofold. First, it shows the benefits of introducing class alongside identity in the analysis of football fandom. By historically tracing the class dynamics that marked a particular locality I was able to present the ways in which people gather along class lines to produce a particular type of fandom. In this sense, class operates to create specific types of solidarities and thus contributes to the production



of homogenous social spaces able to sustain durable identities. Besides that, the polarization of football fans in Cluj-Napoca along class lines stresses the complex interplay between ethnicity and class to be found in specific sites. Rather than treating the two as distinct areas of social reality it is more profitable to analyze them in conjunction looking at the ways in which class differences come to be ethnicized or how ethnic contentions are framed in terms of class. This perspective permits the uncovering of the multiple subject positions hidden behind the broad categories of class or ethnicity (Hall, 1996b).

Second, the constitution of a fan identity illustrated that ethnicity, although often emphasized, is rarely the sole principle of identification among football fans. Situationally people might identify themselves and others in ethnic terms, but in the constitution of identities many social differences, besides the ethnic ones, are also mobilized. This should make us aware of the complex relations to be found between various identifying categories in the everyday practice of individuals and should orient us to look for the whole array of distinctions functioning in particular settings, rather than pointing only towards the well known notions such as ethnicity or class.

The current research uncovered a series of questions that remained largely unaddressed given the limited scope of the present work. By concentrating on processes taking place at the local level the regional and national dynamics of football fandom in Romania was kept out of sight. An exploration of the relations linking football fans across the country would offer a complete picture about the existing rivalries and solidarities. The place of football fans in the Romanian football world should also be questioned by exploring the institutional structure of the game. Football officials, investors, trainers, players, referees and football fans are all caught in a web of relations shaping the world of Romanian club football, in its turn dependent on continental and international legal and sporting arrangements. An accurate picture of the game would include an analysis of this field in its entirety. Not least, the power of capital in creating football sites should also be taken into account. As the case of C.F.R. in Cluj-Napoca shows, an influx of capital in the club triggered changes going well beyond the boundaries of the business. The sources of the capital invested in football, the agents involved in this process as well as the effects of mobilizing large amounts of money for sporting (and other) purposes should be critically engaged with.



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