

## Abstract

In this work we explore boundary objects (BO) at the Hamburg-based football club FC St Pauli with both ‘home’ and ‘way’ fans. Utilizing Star and Griesemer’s (1989) broad categorizations of ‘material’ and ‘conceptual’ boundary objects as well as Carlile’s (2002) three tiers of boundary objects (syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic) we present identified boundary object’s that reflect fan understanding of FC St. Pauli as a bastion of anti-racist, anti-sexist, antisemitic and anti-homophobic political policy in sport.

## Main Body

Politics and sport do mix and the social constructs that underpin both pervade in terraces at both a local and global level (Power et al., 2020). Problematically, racism and xenophobia in football have been long-standing phenomenon (Kassimeris et al., 2022) and football itself has legitimised racism (Kilvington et al., 2022; Bradley, 2024). German football has seen the rise of neo-Nazism since the fall of the Berlin wall reflecting an alignment with Germany’s fascist past (Kassimeris, 2009) underpinned by a lack of resources to combat spectator driven incidents (Müller et al., 2024). One club has sought to combat this shift and transform the perception of football through continuous libertarian leftist campaigns and protests (Totten, 2014) to be more than just a football team (Viñas et al., 2020); Hamburg’s FC St Pauli. Committed to civic opportunity, FC St Pauli (Gang et al., 2023) represent idealism in football (Griggs, 2012) and this work seeks to explore how that idealism is constructed through exploring the phenomena of boundary objects. BOs are objects that inhabit several social worlds but have different meaning within those social worlds but share a common structure (Star and Griesemer, 1989). Bergman et al., (2007, p. 55) state that “any artefact that is shared between two or more actors at the boundary of two social worlds can be regarded as a boundary object.” A salient function of boundary objects is to enable “one group to speak to another” (Carlile, 2002) by the provision of shared language providing a shared language which is meaningful to all stakeholders. Consequently BOs are dynamic and can be used to facilitate; debate evaluate and illuminate interests, in this instance leftist policy, social idealism (Griggs, 2011, Totten, 2014) and a focus on remembrance of the victims of fascism (Tobar et al., 2024). Data was collected at the home of FC St Pauli, Millerntor-Stadion over nine home games with thirty-one fans from nine teams all in the German Bundesliga utilising a translator affiliated with FC St. Pauli for access. Data reveals that the district of St. Pauli itself along with graffiti and anti-fascist humour (*kien wein den faschisten!*- No wine for fascists!) represent syntactic boundary objects that delineates complex social narratives, Stickers, that cover virtually every inch of the exterior and interior of Millerntor-Stadion reflect semantic BOs while the lack of traditional commercial partners at St, Pauli forms the structural basis of pragmatic BOs. The identified BOs play a central role across fan bases and assist with the political negotiation and the addressing of political complexity within and outside football. The work provides new ways to understand the relationships between objects and different fan types. Data also provides new ways of understanding how meaningful social negotiation is enacted in football. This new

insight can assist in helping other clubs understand the fundamentals of rigorous, socially constructed fan led political discourse that impacts educationally at both a micro and macro level.

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