

## Managing Crowds at Sports Mega Events: Examining the Impact of 'Fan Parks' at International Football Tournaments between 2002 and 2016

**Authors :** Joel Rookwood

**Abstract :** Sports mega events have become increasingly significant in sporting, political and economic terms, with analysis often focusing on issues including resource expenditure, development, legacy and sustainability. Transnational tournaments can inspire interest from a variety of demographics, and the operational management of such events can involve contributions from a range of personnel. In addition to television audiences events also attract attending spectators, and in football contexts the temporary migration of fans from potentially rival nations and teams can present event organising committees and security personnel with various challenges in relation to crowd management. The behaviour, interaction and control of supporters has previously led to incidents of disorder and hooliganism, with damage to property as well as injuries and deaths proving significant consequences. The Heysel tragedy at the 1985 European Cup final in Brussels is a notable example, where 39 fans died following crowd disorder and mismanagement. Football disasters and disorder, particularly in the context of international competition, have inspired responses from police, law makers, event organisers, clubs and associations, including stadium improvements, legislative developments and crowd management practice to improve the effectiveness of spectator safety. The growth and internationalisation of fandom and developments in event management and tourism have seen various responses to the evolving challenges associated with hosting large numbers of visiting spectators at mega events. In football contexts 'fan parks' are a notable example. Since the first widespread introduction in European football competitions at the 2006 World Cup finals in Germany, these facilities have become a staple element of such mega events. This qualitative, longitudinal, multi-continent research draws on extensive semi-structured interview and observation data. As a frame of reference, this work considers football events staged before and after the development of fan parks. Research was undertaken at four World Cup finals (Japan 2002, Germany 2006, South Africa 2010 and Brazil 2014), four European Championships (Portugal 2004, Switzerland/Austria 2008, Poland/Ukraine 2012 and France 2016), four other confederation tournaments (Ghana 2008, Qatar 2011, USA 2011 and Chile 2015), and four European club finals (Istanbul 2005, Athens 2007, Rome 2009 and Basle 2016). This work found that these parks are typically temporarily erected, specifically located zones where supporters congregate together irrespective of allegiances to watch matches on large screens, and partake in other forms of organised on-site entertainment. Such facilities can also allow organisers to control the behaviour, confine the movement and monitor the alcohol consumption of supporters. This represents a notable shift in policy from previous football tournaments, when the widely assumed causal link between alcohol and hooliganism which frequently shaped legislative and police responses to disorder, also dissuaded some authorities from permitting fans to consume alcohol in and around stadia. It also reflects changing attitudes towards modern football fans. The work also found that in certain contexts supporters have increasingly engaged with such provision which impacts fan behaviour, but that this is relative to factors including location, facilities, management and security.

**Keywords :** event, facility, fan, management, park

**Conference Title :** ICSMM 2017 : International Conference on Sport Management and Marketing

**Conference Location :** Paris, France

**Conference Dates :** April 18-19, 2017