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## **“Just Push the Doors. They Are Open”: Women’s Football as Everyday Resistance in Europe**

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**“Just Push the Doors. They Are Open”: Women’s Football as  
Everyday Resistance in Europe**

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## Introduction

*“I say to all the women, and you know I have four daughters, so I have a few at home, I say to all the women that you have the power to change. Pick the right battles. Pick the right fights. You have the power to change. You have the power to convince us men what we have to do and what we don't have to do. You do it. Just do it. With men, with FIFA, you will find open doors. Just push the doors. They are open.”*

- Gianni Infantino, 18 August 2023, at the press conference ahead of the final of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup.<sup>1</sup>

FIFA President Gianni Infantino kicked off the press conference leading up to the biggest Women's World Cup final yet with a speech claiming that female footballers are in charge of ensuring they receive equal opportunities as their male counterparts. In this speech, Infantino accomplishes to diminish the women's position within the sport, as well as lay the blame on the disparities between men and women footballers on the women rather than the men, and more importantly, FIFA and the institutional inequalities that exist within both football and society. While equality within football has come a long way during the past decades, Infantino's speech reveals that there is still much to be done to improve women's' position within the governing intuitions of football.

Association football (also known as soccer, hereafter football) is the most popular sport in the world. The FIFA 2023 Women's World Cup saw viewing records being broken in multiple countries despite unconventional kick-off times in Europe and the Americas, in addition to a record amount of 1,978,274 people attending the matches in person.<sup>2</sup> Being the fastest growing sport in the world today, women's football consequently becomes a platform where gendered social issues gain visibility. Therefore, due to the consumption of international football, and increasingly women's football, football plays a large role in shaping and establishing gender

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<sup>1</sup> “Women's World Cup: FIFA Boss Gianni Infantino Sparks Fury after He Tells Players ‘convince Us Men’ in Equal Pay Fight,” Sky News, August 18, 2023, <https://news.sky.com/story/womens-world-cup-fifa-boss-gianni-infantino-sparks-fury-after-he-tells-players-convince-us-men-in-equal-pay-fight-12942269>.

<sup>2</sup> “Spain Reign as Women's World Cup Goes beyond Greatness - FIFA,” FIFA, August 21, 2023, <https://www.fifa.com/fifaplus/en/tournaments/womens/worldcup/australia-new-zealand2023/articles/tournament-review-england-spain-australia-new-zealand-beyond-greatness>; Janek Speight and Kalika Mehta, “World Cup Hits Attendance and TV-Rating Highs,” DW, August 13, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/womens-world-cup-sees-attendance-and-tv-rating-records-tumble/a-66503615>; Trevor Stynes, “Women's World Cup Final Draws Record TV Figures in Spain, England,” Reuters, August 22, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/womens-world-cup-final-draws-record-tv-figures-spain-england-2023-08-21/>.

relations not only in the sport, but outside the pitch as well. As a result, women's football can be used as a case study of how women's sports is a form of everyday resistance, both within and beyond the sport.

There has been an increase in research on women's football as a result of the growing popularity of the sport. New statistics and reports are released regularly showing how women's football is gaining more recognition and attention, including improved perceptions of the sport, new viewer records and more lucrative broadcasting deals.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, there is still a distinct difference between men's and women's professional football, such as unequal pay, unequal job security, and unequal representation in media. Associations, both global and regional – such as Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) – are on the forefront of organising and governing international football, both for women and men, and therefore play a significant role in regulating how women's football is governed, represented, and promoted.

This thesis will seek to answer two main research questions: How does women's football as everyday resistance challenge power structures and gender norms within football, and; How does women's football as everyday resistance affect sports governance regarding women's football in Europe? To answer these research questions, this thesis will use women's football as a case study to look at how women's football as everyday resistance challenges the power structures and social norms that are in place within international football, and how this influences the governance of women's football. It will do so by looking at the changes that associations are adopting and implementing regarding women's football, and by drawing on previous literature on the intersection between women's football and gender relations. Due to the rise of popularity surrounding women's football within Europe during the past decade, as well as the scope of the thesis, this thesis will focus on women's football and gender equality within Europe. It will thus focus on how associations such as FIFA, UEFA, and the English Football Association (FA) have developed and are planning on further developing women's football.<sup>4</sup> There has been limited research done combining women's sports and everyday

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid; "FA WSL to Be Broadcast Overseas for the First Time," the FA's Women's Leagues and Competitions, accessed November 12, 2022, <https://womenscompetitions.thefa.com/Article/fa-wsl-overseas-broadcast-deal-020919>; "It's All to Play for: Third of Brits Now Fans of Women's Football and 69% of These Believe It Deserves the Same Profile as the Men's Game," Barclay's, accessed November 12, 2022, <https://home.barclays/news/press-releases/2019/09/third-of-brits-now-fans-of-women-s-football/>.

<sup>4</sup> "Football Stakeholders Agree Progress on Competitiveness, Women's Football and Governance: Inside UEFA," November 21, 2022, <https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/news/027b-169067b195cc-4a7298a430b4-1000-football-stakeholders-agree-progress-on-competitiveness-wome/>; "UEFA Executive Committee Approves First Dedicated Women's Football Licensing Regulations," UEFA, May 11, 2022, <https://www.uefa.com/returntoplay/news/0275-151c94376657-090c3bee485f-1000--women-s-champions->

resistance and how this affects and challenges existing gender roles. Therefore, this thesis will add to the literature combining feminism, sports governance and resistance studies.

In chapter I, I summarise the history of women's football in Europe since the 1900s and set the context for the debate on women's football and everyday resistance. Following this, chapter II surveys scholarly literature and introduces the key concepts resistance, everyday resistance and sports governance, and analyses the debate on everyday resistance and sports governance. Chapter III lays out the methodology used in this thesis and identifies the research question. In chapter IV the theory will be applied to the case study of women's football, answering the research question. The conclusion summarises the findings of this thesis, as well as its contributions and limitations. The main argument of this thesis emphasises the importance of women's football as everyday resistance in challenging existing power structures and social norms through the continuous participation in the sport despite widespread discouragement and assumptions of who should and should not play football, and that continuous resistance influences how women's football is governed.

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[league-licensing-regs-approved/](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/uefaorg/Womensfootball/02/60/51/38/2605138_DOWNLOAD.pdf); "UEFA Women's Football Strategy 2019-24," UEFA, accessed March 2, 2023, [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/uefaorg/Womensfootball/02/60/51/38/2605138\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/uefaorg/Womensfootball/02/60/51/38/2605138_DOWNLOAD.pdf); "Women's Football Strategy," FIFA, December 1, 2022, <https://www.fifa.com/womens-football/strategy/strategy-details>.

## Chapter 1, Context: The History of Women's Football

Although women's football is the fastest growing sport in the world today, this surge in popularity is a recent development that has taken place during the past decade. Women's football has gone through numerous challenges since the 1900s, including a ban lasting multiple decades in several European countries, including in England, Scotland, Germany, Spain and France.<sup>5</sup> This is in part due to the belief that football is considered to be a masculine sport, and therefore, women are too feminine for the sport.<sup>6</sup> The history of the growth of women's football is fascinating, as the recognition of women's football can be considered to be a representation of the popular beliefs and norms concerning gender roles in society throughout various periods of time.

With most men fighting in the trenches across Europe during the First World War, women took over their jobs to replace the men who were at war. With this new phenomenon of women stepping into the workforce, which was previously a men's only world, women got a taste of life outside of the home and. This newly found freedom outside the home extended further than their participation in the labour force. During the late 1910s and early 1920s, women's football had grown exponentially in England, challenging the popularity of men's football once the men returned home from the war.<sup>7</sup> The participation in the sport by factory women was encouraged by their employers, who thought it would benefit the overall health of their workers, and consequently increase their productivity.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the matches that were played during the war years were charity matches, which were so popular that the games were eventually played in sold out men's football stadiums.<sup>9</sup>

However, with the restoration of pre-war gender roles following the return of the soldiers after the war, women were forced to return to their homes. Still, the women's desire to continue

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<sup>5</sup> Carrie Dunn and Joanna Welford, "The FAWSL's Context within the History of Women's Football," in *Football and the FA Women's Super League: Structure, Governance and Impact* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 7–16, 11; Johanna Haas, "Women's Soccer Was Banned for 50 Years – Here's Why and How It Came Back," Girls Soccer Network, March 22, 2022, <https://girlssoccernetwork.com/europe-womens-soccer-ban/#:~:text=Scotland%20was%20the%20first%20country,failed%20to%20develop%20for%20decades>.

<sup>6</sup> Jayne Caudwell, "Women's Football in the United Kingdom: Theorizing Gender and Unpacking the Butch Lesbian Image," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 23, no. 4 (1999): 390–402, 395.

<sup>7</sup> Jo Welford, "Outsiders on the Inside: Integrating Women's and Men's Football Clubs in England," in *Female Football Players and Fans: Intruding into a Man's World*, eds. Gertrud Pfister and Stacey Pope (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 103–24, 106.

<sup>8</sup> Stacey Pope, "'Who Could Name an England Women's Footballer?': Female Fans of Men's Football and Their Views of Women's Football in England," in *Female Football Players and Fans: Intruding into a Man's World*, ed. Gertrud Pfister and Stacey Pope (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 125–53, 126.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

playing football did not decrease. Despite this, the novelty of women's charity games wore off, and the push for a return to the pre-war gender order resulted in the English Football Association (FA) issuing an official ban in 1921, disallowing men's teams to lending their grounds to female teams.<sup>10</sup> In their December 1921 statement, the FA claims that due to "complaints having been made as to football being played by women, Council feel impelled to express their strong opinion that the game is quite unsuitable for females and should not be encouraged."<sup>11</sup> Additionally, claims of football leading to infertility were prominent.<sup>12</sup> It was not only England who returned to its pre-war gender roles after the end of the First World War. Following this decision, the Swedish media used these same claims to argue that women should not be playing football, leading to a decline in women's football in Sweden. Similarly, women's football in France saw a decline following 1921, with no organised women's games by 1932. In Germany the first recorded women's team was forced to quit in 1931 due to the public objection to women playing football.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the ban implemented by the FA, women's football continued to be played, but on a much smaller scale, independent from the FA. Most famous were the Dick, Kerr Ladies from the north of England, who were founded in 1917 and played for 58 years, until 1965.<sup>14</sup> At their peak prior to the FA ban, the Dick, Kerr Ladies had a record of 53,000 supporters at a game, but due to the ban the charitable aspect of the women's game lost its recognition. This, in combination with the lack of available fields and general acceptance as post-war England returned to its pre-war normalcy, the crowds at women's games shrunk.<sup>15</sup> Dick, Kerr Ladies, however, were not reliant on pitches owned by an FA affiliated men's team: The team had their own facilities supported by the Dick, Kerr and Company, where many of the players worked.<sup>16</sup> Despite the decrease in popularity in England following the ban, the Dick, Kerr Ladies went on a tour of the United States in 1922, where college football for women had recently been established.<sup>17</sup> While this tour shows the increased interest in women's football in the United States, women's football in England and many other European countries was excluded both

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<sup>10</sup> Dunn and Welford, "The FAWSL's Context," 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Carrie Dunn, "The Myth," in *"Unsuitable for Females": The Rise of the Lionesses and Women's Football in England* (Edinburgh: Arena Sport, 2023), 26-37, 28.

<sup>12</sup> Pope, "'Who Could Name an England Women's Footballer?'," 147.

<sup>13</sup> Dunn and Welford, "The FAWSL's Context," 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Dunn, "The Myth," 29.

<sup>17</sup> Dunn and Welford, "The FAWSL's Context," 11.



socially and culturally, resulting in a long-term decline in the popularity of women's football from 1921 onwards.<sup>18</sup>

Prior to the FA rescinding the ban, Mexico hosted an unofficial world cup in 1971, also known as the Copa 71, with six teams participating. This meant that it was a big risk for the still unofficial England team to fly to Mexico to participate, as the governing body did not approve of the tournament.<sup>19</sup> However, the Copa 71 tournament turned out to be a great commercial success, with 112,500 people attending the final between Mexico and Denmark.<sup>20</sup> The world cup saw many large businesses and brand sponsoring the tournament and various teams, with Martini & Rossi being one of the main sponsors.<sup>21</sup> Despite the popularity of the Copa 71 in Mexico, the organisers played heavily into the fact that it was a women's tournament, and thus aimed at attracting women and families: The goalposts were pink, the staff wore pink clothes, the players were encouraged to wear hot pants and blouses, and their dressing rooms had beauty parlours.<sup>22</sup> This shows that although the tournament drew large crowds and funds, it still relied on the assumptions that women are feminine, and thus the game and its surrounding environment have to be adjusted to fit this more feminine idea of women's football.

While the ban concerning women's football was rescinded in the early 1970s, it still took several decades for many European nations to establish professional women's leagues. That did not mean that women's leagues were not created. In England multiple regional amateur leagues were created. Because these leagues were amateur leagues, the women who participated did not receive any money for their efforts, and it was common for the players to have full time jobs. The Doncaster Belles, established in 1969 as the Belle Vue Belles, was one of England's best women's teams during the 1990s. The Belles joined the amateur National League for the 1991-92 season and won both the league and the cup without losing any games

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<sup>18</sup> Dunn and Welford, "The FAWSL's Context," 11; Jean Williams, "The Girls of Summer, the Daughters of Title IX: Women's Football in the United States," in *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 33–81, 47.

<sup>19</sup> Carrie Dunn, "The Forgotten," in *"Unsuitable for Females": The Rise of the Lionesses and Women's Football in England* (Edinburgh: Arena Sport, 2023), 67–75, 69.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew Hall, "Copa 71: When 112,500 Fans Packed out the Unofficial Women's World Cup Final," *The Guardian*, September 8, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2023/sep/08/copa-71-when-112500-fans-packed-out-the-unofficial-womens-world-cup-final>.

<sup>21</sup> Bill Wilson, "Mexico 1971: When Women's Football Hit the Big Time," *BBC News*, December 7, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-46149887>.

<sup>22</sup> Pope, "Who Could Name an England Women's Footballer?," 128; John Williams and Jackie Woodhouse, "Can Play, Will Play?: Women and Football in Britain," in *British Football and Social Change: Getting into Europe*, eds. John Williams and Stephen Wagg (University of Leicester: Norman Chester Centre for Football Research, 1994), 85–110.

and won both the league and cup again in the 1993-94 season.<sup>23</sup> With the women not being paid for playing football, despite their achievements, most of them were working full time and would train only once a week in preparation for the weekend's game.<sup>24</sup> In addition to this, the players had to travel to the games on the weekends with their own money and means, including accommodation and food.<sup>25</sup> This meant that sometimes the players had to miss days at work due to travel to and from games, which in turn meant they would lose income. With the women's league having fewer teams, the women would often have to travel far to play away to play for a good team.<sup>26</sup> Most of their free time and social life thus consisted of football and the team. It is thus evident that while football became more accessible and acceptable since the lifting of the ban in 1971, not much else had improved for women playing football on a higher level. Women still had to work and give up many social aspects to play in the National League.

In 1995, FIFA president Sepp Blatter announced that “the future is feminine” in a press release.<sup>27</sup> Since then, women's football has been claimed to be the fastest growing sport in the world.<sup>28</sup> Despite this press release and its subsequent claim, it would take years for multiple countries to establish their first (semi-)professional women's leagues. Norway and Sweden were the first countries to establish professional women's leagues, founded in 1987 and 1988 respectively.<sup>29</sup> Germany followed shortly after, in 1990, with a large part of Europe following in the next few decades: The Netherlands in 2007, France in 2010, Belgium in 2015, and Spain in 2020.<sup>30</sup> Surprisingly, the Women's Super League (WSL) in England was only established in

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<sup>23</sup> Carrie Dunn and Joanna Welford, “The FAWSL2 Controversy: Doncaster Belles and Lincoln Ladies,” in *Football and the FA Women's Super League: Structure, Governance and Impact* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 43–58, 44.

<sup>24</sup> Carrie Dunn, “The Belles,” in *“Unsuitable for Females”: The Rise of the Lionesses and Women's Football in England* (Edinburgh: Arena Sport, 2023), 111–44, 113.

<sup>25</sup> Carrie Dunn, “The Goalscorer,” in *“Unsuitable for Females”: The Rise of the Lionesses and Women's Football in England* (Edinburgh: Arena Sport, 2023), 56–66, 60.

<sup>26</sup> Carrie Dunn, “The Adventurer,” in *“Unsuitable for Females”: The Rise of the Lionesses and Women's Football in England* (Edinburgh: Arena Sport, 2023), 76–85, 80.

<sup>27</sup> Gertrud Pfister, “The Future Is Female!? On the Past and Present of Women's Football in Germany,” in *German Football: History, Culture, Society*, eds. Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young (London: Routledge, 2006), 93–126, 93.

<sup>28</sup> Jean Williams, *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> “Toppfotball Kvinner,” Toppserien, October 4, 2023, <https://toppserien.no/om-toppfotball-kvinner/>; “Ligor, Svenska Cupen Och Statistik,” OBOS Damallsvenskan, accessed November 9, 2023, <https://obosdamallsvenskan.se/om-obos-damallsvenskan/obos-damallsvenskan-svenska-cupen>.

<sup>30</sup> Annika Becker, “Frauenfußball-Kolumne: Tradition Bricht Weg: Wie Sah Die Bundesliga Der Frauen Zur Gründung Aus?,” *Express*, May 20, 2023, <https://www.express.de/sport/fussball/wie-sah-die-bundesliga-der-frauen-zur-gruendung-eigentlich-aus-574008>; “Zes Profclubs in Eredivisie Vrouwen,” NU.nl, March 20, 2007, <https://www.nu.nl/sport/1014311/zes-profclubs-in-eredivisie-vrouwen.html>; “Statut pro Pour Ces Dames,” *L'Équipe*, May 16, 2009, <https://www.lequipe.fr/Football/Actualites/Statut-pro-pour-ces-dames/19530>; Sporza, “Women's BeNe League Verdwijnt, Competitie Met Play-Offs in De Plaats,” Sporza, April 14, 2015, [https://sporza.be/nl/2015/04/14/women\\_s-bene-league-verdwijnt-competitie-met-play-offs-in-de-pla-1-2304411/](https://sporza.be/nl/2015/04/14/women_s-bene-league-verdwijnt-competitie-met-play-offs-in-de-pla-1-2304411/); The Associated Press, “Women's Soccer Gains Professional Status in Spain,” *The Seattle Times*, June 10, 2020, <https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/womens-soccer-gains-professional-status-in-spain/>.

in 2010 and remained semi-professional until the 2018-19 season – with the Doncaster Belles being one of the founding members of the WSL.<sup>31</sup>

Today, inequalities are still prevalent within women's football. Professional female footballers often earn less than their male counterparts, even if they do perform better in the women's leagues.<sup>32</sup> There are, however, several European national associations who now pay their female national teams the same amount as their male national teams.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, women often train and play their games on lower quality pitches than men, which leads to an increased chance of women injuring themselves. During the past few years, women's football has seen an exponential increase of anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries, in part due to the poor quality of their football fields, which has a recovery time of nearly a year.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, women footballers have fewer physical therapists available than their male counterparts, which again leads to less rehabilitation possibilities and bigger chances of sustaining long-term injuries.<sup>35</sup> Lastly, sexism and prejudice still play a large role in how women's football is perceived, and consequently in how women's footballers are treated.

Despite these challenges, the determination of the women of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has ensured that the women playing football today have greater opportunities than they had a decade ago. By advocating for women's rights and resisting gender norms, the women of the 20<sup>th</sup> century laid the groundwork for advancing women's football today. Yet there are still issues within women's football today, which will only be improved if women today continue to show the determination that the women of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had. While some women do this by loudly

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<sup>31</sup> Carrie Dunn and Joanna Welford, "The Launch of the FAWSL," essay, in *Football and the FA Women's Super League: Structure, Governance and Impact* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 17–31, 25.; "WSL Goes Professional - FA Women's Super League," The FA's Women's Leagues and Competitions, accessed November 9, 2023, <https://womenscompetitions.thefa.com/Article/super-league-professional-era-060918>.

<sup>32</sup> Claire Poppelwell-Scevak, "The Gender Pay Gap: How FIFA Dropped the Ball," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 20, no. 1 (2022): 325–50, 326.

<sup>33</sup> "KNVB Gaat Oranjevrouwen Dezelfde Premies Betalen Als Mannelijke Internationals," NOS, June 20, 2022, <https://nos.nl/collectie/13906/artikel/2433345-knvv-gaat-oranjevrouwen-dezelfde-premies-betalen-als-mannelijke-internationals>; Stine Løvmo Lie, "Herrelandslaget Tar Lønnskutt for Å Hjelpe Fotballkvinnene," NRK, January 3, 2018, <https://www.nrk.no/sport/herrelandslaget-tar-lonnskutt-for-a-hjelpe-fotballkvinnene-1.13717392>.

<sup>34</sup> Morgan Bailey and Nathaneal Ahearn, "How to Tackle the Increased Rate of ACL Injuries in Women's Football," British Orthopaedic Association, June 13, 2023, <https://www.boa.ac.uk/resource/how-to-tackle-the-increased-rate-of-acl-injuries-in-women-s-football.html>; Laura Hunter, "Future of Football: Why ACL Injuries Have Been on Rise in Women's Game - and the Technology and Solutions to Fix It," Sky Sports, September 12, 2023, <https://www.skysports.com/football/news/11095/12926431/future-of-football-why-acl-injuries-have-been-on-rise-in-womens-game-and-the-technology-and-solutions-to-fix-it>.

<sup>35</sup> Tom Garry, "More than a Quarter of Top-Flight Women's Clubs Have No Physio or Team Doctor," The Telegraph, May 26, 2021, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/womens-sport/2021/05/26/quarter-top-flight-womens-clubs-have-no-physio-team-doctor/>.

advocating for the advance of women's football – and women's sports in general – others do this in a more subdued way, perhaps even unintentionally in some instances.

## Chapter 2, Theoretical Framework: Resistance Studies, Everyday Resistance and Sports Governance

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study that looks at how women's football is a form of everyday resistance, and how women's football as everyday resistance affects sport governance within Europe. Additionally, this thesis will take on a radical feminist perspective, which believes that women's football should not be compared to men's football and should rather remain separate entities, as football governance is built on existing structure of masculinity and underlying power relations.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the two entities cannot and should not be compared and integrated with one another until there is an institutional and social change that will give women more equal opportunities. By looking at women's football as a form of everyday resistance, this thesis will add another dimension to the existing debate within resistance studies of how marginalised groups use everyday actions and routines to go against the dominant groups. Following Johansson and Vinthagen, I will use the four dimensions laid out in their article to provide a framework to pinpoint forms of everyday resistance: (1) Repertoires; (2) Relationships of agents; (3) Spatialization, and; (4) Temporalization.<sup>37</sup> Sports governance is a more developed field of study, and with the recent boom of women's football, sports governance is ever evolving. I begin this chapter by introducing resistance studies and everyday resistance, outlining everyday resistance in the context of women's football. Then, I discuss the role and importance of sports governance in structuring and influencing women's football.

### Resistance Studies and Everyday Resistance

The concepts of resistance, everyday resistance, power, and agency are essential to this thesis. The field of resistance study is relatively new, and the concept of everyday resistance not widely known. It is therefore important to establish what everyday resistance is and how resistance studies is related to women's football, and furthermore how concepts such as power and agency are essential in analysing resistance.

Resistance studies as a field is a relatively new field of study within academia that includes and combines many theoretical traditions, due to many disciplines and theories using analyses

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<sup>36</sup> Mikael Baaz, Mona Lilja, and Stellan Vinthagen, "Introduction: Resistance Studies as an Academic Pursuit," in *Researching Resistance and Social Change: A Critical Approach to Theory and Practice* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018), 12–33, 21; Jo Welford, "Outsiders on the Inside: Integrating Women's and Men's Football Clubs in England," in *Female Football Players and Fans: Intruding into a Man's World*, eds. Gertrud Pfister and Stacey Pope (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 103-124, 103-105.

<sup>37</sup> Anna Johansson and Stellan Vinthagen, "Dimensions of Everyday Resistance: An Analytical Framework," *Critical Sociology* 42, no. 3 (2016): 417–35, 419.

of resistance to justify their ideas and theories.<sup>38</sup> Whether this is social movement studies, studies on civil warfare and terrorism, or gender studies and feminism, many disciplines investigate various forms of resistance. Resistance studies as an academic field does not have a singular definition of what can be considered resistance but is rather a broad collection of ideas and research on various forms of resistance. Resistance is reliant on context, which is formed by social circumstances unique to every case and form of resistance.<sup>39</sup> This means that there are multitude forms of resistance, both violent and nonviolent. There are however some commonalities between the studies of the various forms of resistance: They all study an activity performed by an opposing group or person, as well as the disagreement between the opposing agent and the dominant agent and/or idea.<sup>40</sup>

Resistance can be understood as actions performed by larger groups and movements, both violent and non-violent, with the goal of changing existing power relations.<sup>41</sup> Often, action includes two important characteristics: Action and opposition.<sup>42</sup> Here, action means that active behaviour is required, such as verbal, cognitive or physical action. Secondly, opposition refers to the act of taking a stand against something or someone.<sup>43</sup> Besides action and opposition, there is scholarly debate regarding whether intention and recognition is needed for something to be considered resistance.<sup>44</sup> Can something be considered resistance if it is not recognised by those who are being resisted? Furthermore, can something be resistance if it is not intended to be resistance? This thesis argues that although intent is not always necessary, recognition is an essential part of resistance. While some people may not actively participate in any form of resistance, their actions may subconsciously and unintentionally resist dominant ideas or people. However, if no one recognises forms of resistance, whether they be conscious or subconscious, the path to social or institutional change may be difficult, if not impossible.

This thesis will focus on the everyday resistance subfield of resistance studies. Everyday resistance is a term coined by James C. Scott and encompasses small acts that often are concealed or not paid attention to, which have an effect on shifting social norms.<sup>45</sup> These small

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<sup>38</sup> Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen, "Introduction: Resistance Studies," 17.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>42</sup> Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, "Conceptualizing Resistance," *Sociological Forum* 19, no. 4 (2004): 533–54, 538.

<sup>43</sup> Risa F. Isard, E. Nicole Melton, and Charles D. T. Macaulay, "Women's Sport and Everyday Resistance," *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 5 (2023), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Hollander and Einwohner, "Conceptualizing Resistance," 539.

<sup>45</sup> Isard, Melton, and Macaulay, "Women's Sport and Everyday Resistance," 3; James C. Scott, "Everyday Forms of Resistance," *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 4 (1989): 33–62, 34.

acts are carried out by members of an oppressed group, and their seemingly mundane actions go against the dominant power structures and social norms that oppress them.<sup>46</sup> Often, everyday resistance is invisible, in opposition to organised resistance, which usually aims to be visible in order to gain public attention.<sup>47</sup> Generally, everyday resistance focuses on the impact that small acts may have on power structures and social norms, and focuses mainly on changing social norms rather than directly changing policies.<sup>48</sup> Traditionally, the debate on everyday resistance has looked at how peasants and the lower class have risen up against class injustices.<sup>49</sup> Isard, Melton and Macaulay suggest that everyday resistance is available through all forms of women's sports, as men's sports is continuously being privileged, whereas women's sports is often devalued.<sup>50</sup> By looking at how women as a group within the world of sports and football use their agency to resist the power structures and social norms that contain them, this thesis will broaden the study of everyday resistance and resistance studies and contribute to the ongoing discussion concerning the effects of the increasing popularity of women's football.

Johansson and Vinthagen have provided a framework of four dimensions that comprise everyday resistance, which this thesis will build upon. The first dimension is repertoires of everyday resistance. Repertoires of everyday resistance concerns the "how" of everyday resistance: How do people resist the dominant forms of power, and what is the social context surrounding the acts of resistance?<sup>51</sup> This is built upon Charles Tilly's concept of repertoires of contention, which Tilly defines as a set of culturally learned routines, which influence how groups interact in conflict with one another.<sup>52</sup> The second dimension, the relationship of agents, refers to who is carrying out the act of resistance, against whom/what, and what their relationship is with one another.<sup>53</sup> Johansson and Vinthagen identify three types of agents: those who do the resistance, those who the resistance is aimed at, and those on the outside

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<sup>46</sup> Isard, Melton, and Macaulay, "Women's Sport and Everyday Resistance," 1.

<sup>47</sup> Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen, "Introduction: Resistance Studies," 21.

<sup>48</sup> Isard, Melton, and Macaulay, "Women's Sport and Everyday Resistance," 3; Scott, "Everyday Forms of Resistance," 57.

<sup>49</sup> Marta Iñiguez de Heredia, *Everyday Resistance, Peacebuilding and State-Making: Insights from "Africa's World War"* (Manchester University Press, 2017); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (London: Yale University Press, 1985); Susan M. Thomson, "Whispering Truth to Power: The Everyday Resistance of Rwandan Peasants to Post-Genocide Reconciliation," *African Affairs* 110, no. 440 (2011): 439–56.

<sup>50</sup> Isard, Melton, and Macaulay, "Women's Sport and Everyday Resistance," 3.

<sup>51</sup> Johansson and Vinthagen, "Dimensions of Everyday Resistance," 419.

<sup>52</sup> Johansson and Vinthagen, "Dimensions of Everyday Resistance," 421; Charles Tilly, "Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain," in *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, eds. Mark Traugott (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 15–42, 26.

<sup>53</sup> Isard, Melton, and Macaulay, "Women's Sport and Everyday Resistance," 3; Johansson and Vinthagen, "Dimensions of Everyday Resistance," 422.

observing the resistance.<sup>54</sup> Thirdly, the authors identify spatialisation as the social spaces that resistance exists in<sup>55</sup> This describes how social life is structured in specific spaces, which provides context for how resistance arises within various spaces. The last dimension, temporalisation, conceptualises the importance of time. The socially constructed ideas that are present and dominant during a specific time period is important to take into consideration and is therefore essential when studying resistance.<sup>56</sup> Spatialisation and temporalisation are mutually exclusive, as all actions take place in a certain time and space.

One of the key concepts within resistance studies and international relations is power. Traditionally, power has been associated with military power and means.<sup>57</sup> However, power has many definitions. One of the main definitions of power derives from Foucault, who focused on how power is used rather than exploring what power is.<sup>58</sup> Using the power/knowledge nexus developed by Foucault, this thesis will take into consideration the role power plays in shaping norms and ideas in society. The power/knowledge nexus claims that power and knowledge are inherently interconnected: power shapes knowledge through its intentions, and in turn knowledge shapes the way power is exercised.<sup>59</sup> Thus, power and knowledge continuously influence one another, and shape how people think. Linking Foucault's power/knowledge nexus to resistance studies and everyday resistance, Lilja et al. explore the power/resistance/resistance nexus. Here, Lilja et al. show how power, organised resistance and everyday resistance are interrelated with one another. Examples of organised resistance include civil wars, revolutions, and demonstrations. The authors argue that forms of everyday resistance are often followed by organised resistance, and organised resistance encourages everyday resistance due to the interconnectedness between power and agency.<sup>60</sup> In short, this means that (everyday) resistance is a consequence of various power and knowledge struggles.<sup>61</sup> By shifting the view on power, Foucault has consequently ultimately shaped the view on the role of power in relation to resistance.

Another important concept related to resistance studies is agency. In this context, agency refers to a person's capacity to do things, such as performing an action or exerting power, which

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<sup>54</sup> Johansson and Vinthagen, "Dimensions of Everyday Resistance," 423.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 425.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 427.

<sup>57</sup> Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen, "Introduction: Resistance Studies," 22.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Michel Foucault, "Prison Talk," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, eds. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 37–54, 52.

<sup>60</sup> Mona Lilja et al., "How Resistance Encourages Resistance: Theorizing the Nexus between Power, 'Organised Resistance' and 'Everyday Resistance,'" *Journal of Political Power* 10, no. 1 (2017): 40–54, 41.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.



can be through the act of opposing something or someone.<sup>62</sup> Importantly, however, agency does not have to involve resistance. Nonetheless, without agency it is impossible to resist the dominant and oppressive powers, nor is it impossible to elicit social change. Within women's football, women's agency is reliant on the existing men's structures. Due to football being considered a masculine sport and thus a world dominated by men, women often rely on men's recognition and acceptance in order to fully exercise their agency.<sup>63</sup> While the women still have agency without the acceptance of the men in the football world, their agency is less influential and effective compared to when they are recognised by their male counterparts, which in turn again increases the impact of women's agency in challenging the masculine environment of football.<sup>64</sup>

### Sports Governance

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, good governance means that “processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal.”<sup>65</sup> Sports governance concerns how sports are being governed and by whom: It concerns the governing bodies of a certain sport, and their authority and decision-making regarding the rules, practices, and participation in the sport.<sup>66</sup> Within Europe, there are three main levels of governing bodies of football: On a global level, through FIFA; On a regional level, through UEFA, and; On a national level, through national football associations. It is these governing institutions that decide the rules and practices regarding the sport, and as a result set the tone for how women's football fits into the social structures that football exists in.

Social structures are vital in understanding how the world works, both on a formal- and on an informal level. Formal social structures look at organisations and larger institutions, such as FIFA and UEFA, whereas informal structures deal with social networks, such as friends and family or other acquaintances.<sup>67</sup> The idea of situated knowledge when discussing sports

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<sup>62</sup> Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen, “Introduction: Resistance Studies,” 18; Johansson and Vinthagen, “Dimensions of Everyday Resistance,” 418.

<sup>63</sup> Welford, “Outsiders on the Inside,” 112-113.

<sup>64</sup> Cornel Sandvoss and Emily Ball, “Gender, Play and Identity: A Longitudinal Study of Structure and Agency in Female Football Fandom,” essay, in *Female Football Players and Fans: Intruding into a Man's World*, eds. Gertrud Pfister and Stacey Pope (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 179–307, 302.

<sup>65</sup> “What Is Good Governance?,” UNESCAP, 2009, <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> Arnout Geeraert, “Introduction: The Need for Critical Reflection on Good Governance in Sport,” in *Good Governance in Sport: Critical Reflections*, eds. Arnout Geeraert and Frank van Eekeren (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 1–12, 3.

<sup>67</sup> Christina Prell et al., “Competing Structure, Competing Views: The Role of Formal and Informal Social Structures in Shaping Stakeholder Perceptions,” *Ecology and Society* 15, no. 4 (2010).

governance can help us understand what aspects of knowledge are useful and which are not useful. When making decisions, it is essential to realise that one can never be fully objective, and that we are aware of where our knowledge comes from. It is therefore important to ask how and to whom we apply our knowledge.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, it is important to be aware of the social structures that guide people's lives, and how it affects those who resist existing power structures and social norms, whether this is consciously or unconsciously. Furthermore, it is also important to be aware of how situated knowledge affects those who govern associations such as FIFA and UEFA.

Women's football is governed by the same institutions that govern men's football, but only recently have we seen an increased focus on the governance of women's specifically separate to men's football and football as a whole. FIFA only released their first ever Women's Football Strategy in 2018, in which they outlined their plans and ambitions regarding the growth of women's football, improving the commercial value of the sport, and strengthening the foundations of women's football.<sup>69</sup> While FIFA could boast success in all three of its core aims, FIFA still has a long way to go in regards to improving their commitment to human rights and gender equality.<sup>70</sup> According to Krech, FIFA has used this strategy to give the appearance that the organisation is committed to promoting human rights and equality, specifically women's equality.<sup>71</sup> However, Krech claims that while the Women's Football Strategy does give the appearance of a shift towards an increased importance of human rights and equality, the goal was ultimately promoted *through* football rather than *in* football and FIFA itself, meaning that there was no goal to change the power structures and systems that initially created the institutional inequalities that exist within football.<sup>72</sup> Thus, while there is an appearance of improved equality within football, this is not necessarily the case. Therefore, there is not much institutional and fundamental change within FIFA and football. Consequently, those who are disadvantaged by FIFA will resist inequalities that are a result of the prevailing power structures and social norms within the organisation.

UEFA followed FIFA a year later, publishing their first Women's Football Strategy in 2019. Their goals were a little more ambitious and specific than those in FIFA's Women's Football

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<sup>68</sup> Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): pp. 575-599, 576.

<sup>69</sup> "Women's Football Strategy," FIFA, accessed November 24, 2023, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/baafcb84f1b54a8/original/z7w21ghir8jb9tguvbcq-pdf.pdf>.

<sup>70</sup> "FIFA Women's Football Strategy Celebrates Four-Year Anniversary," FIFA, October 9, 2022, <https://www.fifa.com/womens-football/news/fifa-womens-football-strategy-celebrates-four-year-anniversary>.

<sup>71</sup> Michele Krech, "Towards Equal Rights in the Global Game? FIFA Strategy for Women's Football as a Tightly Bounded Institutional Innovation," *Tilburg Law Review* 25, no. 1 (2020): 12–26, 13.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

Strategy: UEFA wants to support the growth of women's football, change the perception of the sport, double the reach and value of UEFA's biggest leagues, improve standards in all member associations' national teams, and double female representation in all UEFA bodies.<sup>73</sup> It is unclear how successful these aims are, as the strategy's timeframe ends in 2024. However, its five core objectives show a willingness to change the governing structures through increased female representation and participation, which can contribute to a shift in the existing power dynamics, and consequently the existing power structures and social norms within the organisation. One factor contributing to the preservation of the existing power structures and social norms that has been identified in the existing literature is the lack of female representation in football governance institutions, such as FIFA and UEFA.<sup>74</sup> It has been argued that women are more likely to promote fairness and equality in comparison to men. With a lack of women in leadership positions, these values are less likely to be promoted.<sup>75</sup> With UEFA promoting increased female participation within its governing bodies, the organisation seems to aim for an institutional change rather than a superficial change, giving women a chance to participate in all levels of football.

Governance and equality are two terms that are frequently linked together. Often, governance is linked to the degree of equality present in the area that is being governed.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, governance has a direct influence on equality, and various forms of governance can therefore increase and decrease inequalities. With strategies specifically targeting women's football by both FIFA and UEFA, the involvement of women and other groups aim to increase and consequently shift various forms and degrees of inequality. Due to UEFA actively promoting the goal of doubling women participating in its governing bodies, the expectation is that women's football will be considered more centrally in its decision-making than it has in the past, meaning that it will influence and consequently decrease existing inequalities within football.

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<sup>73</sup> "Time for Action: First Ever Uefa Women's Football Strategy Launched," UEFA, May 17, 2019, <https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/about-uefa/news/0251-0f8e6ba98884-3dd4ba899f93-1000--time-for-action-first-ever-uefa-women-s-football-strateg/>.

<sup>74</sup> Beth G. Clarkson et al., "Covid-19: Reflections on Threat and Uncertainty for the Future of Elite Women's Football in England," *Managing Sport and Leisure* 27, no. 1-2 (2020): pp. 50-61, 54.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Martin B Carstensen and Christian Lyhne Ibsen, "Three Dimensions of Institutional Contention: Efficiency, Equality and Governance in Danish Vocational Education and Training Reform," *Socio-Economic Review* 19, no. 3 (2019): 1037-63; Juan Pablo Galvis, "Remaking Equality: Community Governance and the Politics of Exclusion in Bogota's Public Spaces," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 4 (2013): 1458-75; Helle Munk Ravnborg et al., "Land Governance, Gender Equality and Development: Past Achievements and Remaining Challenges," *Journal of International Development* 28, no. 3 (2016): 412-27.

When inequality is prevalent, those who feel like they are disadvantaged or oppressed will resist against the power structures that are reinforcing their oppression. As mentioned previously, this can be through organised resistance, both violent and non-violent, or this can be done subconsciously through everyday actions. However, despite the means of resistance, those who govern must respond to the resistance to some extent. Whether this is simply acknowledging those resisting and their concerns yet not taking any further action, or whether this is done by taking concrete and specific action, not acknowledging those who are resisting and their points of discussion can lead to further discontent among those who are doing the resisting. Thus, resistance will influence governance to some extent, as ignoring resistance will often lead to further discontent. Consequently, a shift in governance will therefore cause a change in the existing social structures that those resisting are opposing.

### **Chapter 3, Methodology**

As previous literature has illustrated, women's football has an extensive history of rules and norms dictating the approval and accessibility of women playing football. As a consequence, it means that the women who continued to play football despite the hindering rules and norms regarding women's football resisted the restrictions imposed on them to various extents. In order to research how everyday resistance has been used by female footballers throughout the last century, power and agency are important concepts that provide the tools to study how institutions reproduce exploitation and suppression, as well as how the exploitation and oppression is being resisted – both in the past and today. By analysing and discussing various cases of women's football as everyday resistance during different decades, demonstrating how they are forms of everyday resistance, and evaluating how these instances of resistance have affected the overarching power structures and social norms, this thesis aims to show that everyday resistance is an important aspect of women's football and the progress it has made. Following this, the two main research questions this thesis seeks to answer are: How does women's football as everyday resistance challenge power structures and gender norms within football, and; How does women's football as everyday resistance affect sports governance regarding women's football in Europe?

Taking everyday resistance as the theoretical lens to analyse women's football, this thesis explores whether we can argue that everyday resistance is an essential and effective driving force for social and institutional change. To answer the research question, this thesis conducts a qualitative analysis of various instances of everyday resistance in women's football. Everyday resistance studies the dominant power structures and social norms, allowing us to see changes in the dominant power structures and social norms at various points during the past century, and consequently draw up connections between everyday resistance and its effects on power structures and social norms. This thesis will look at women's football and how it can be considered everyday resistance in the 1920s, 1970s, and today. All are periods of great changes to the sport for various reasons and will therefore demonstrate the role and extent that women's football as everyday resistance played in the implementation of these changes. Furthermore, this thesis will analyse how these changes have influenced how the sport has been governed during the various time periods, and how sports governance has changed depending on the use of everyday resistance. Additionally, the analysis will highlight how everyday resistance changes throughout time. This thesis will thus compare and analyse how everyday resistance is implemented and used during the various time periods.

This thesis uses Johansson and Vinthagen's framework on identifying the various aspects of everyday resistance. It will therefore look at the repertoires, relationships of agents, spatializations and temporalizations of the various time periods and use these repertoires to establish how everyday resistance is being used and how this influences power structures and social norms. This will further be used to determine how women's football as everyday resistance affects the governance of women's football in Europe. By analysing women's football as everyday resistance in multiple time periods, this thesis will be able to identify the role that seemingly mundane, everyday actions play in encouraging change, and will therefore be used to establish the effectiveness of women's football as everyday resistance.

At first glance, women playing football may not seem like enough reason for it to be considered a form of resistance and an inspiration for change. By analysing the importance of everyday resistance and its effects allows for a new assessment of the importance of seemingly ordinary, everyday activities in encouraging change. The analysis will therefore be done in two parts. First, it will analyse how female footballers have used everyday resistance in the various time periods by using Johansson and Vinthagen's framework, and how this challenges power and social structures. Second, it analyses how women's football is governed, and how this compares to how the female footballers have challenged and influenced the governing bodies in charge of the sport.

This thesis is written with the aim of contributing to the existing literature combining resistance studies and women's football, something that is still underdeveloped. By writing this thesis, I hope to show the progress made within the world of sports and football and the role of women within the world of sport, especially the role they have played persevering the inequalities that women have faced within football. Additionally, I do not intend to make universal claims, but rather to show how women footballers have resisted dominant power structures and social norms in various periods of time throughout the past decade in Europe. With this case study, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature around everyday resistance as well as on the expansion of women's football.

## Chapter 4, Analysis

Women's football has evolved exponentially in the past decade. No one has been a bigger advocate for the sport than the women playing the sport themselves, whether this has been through explicit advocacy for the promotion of the sport, or subdued actions such as playing football and supporting women playing football. Using Johansson and Vinthagen's framework of repertoires for understanding everyday resistance, this thesis will analyse how women's football as everyday resistance challenges social norms and power structures that are in place within women's football.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Women's sport as everyday resistance</b>
<b>Definition</b>	Women using sport to resist societal gender norms, including (but not limited to) women's exclusion from sport
<b>Repertoire</b>	Participating in a sport
<b>Relationship of agents</b>	
<b>Actor</b>	A woman
<b>Target</b>	Societal norms that subjugate women
	Norms of sport that exclude and marginalise women
<b>Observer</b>	Spectators, other athletes, media, any witness
<b>Spatialisation</b>	Norms that dictate sport as the domain of men
<b>Temporalisation</b>	Norms that dictate appropriate ways for women to spend their time

**Table 1: Johansson and Vinthagen's repertoires for understanding everyday resistance.<sup>77</sup>**

In the context of women's football, an example of everyday resistance can simply be women playing football. Women playing football is a form of everyday resistance precisely because societal norms dictate that football is an inherently masculine sport, and thus a male domain. As a result, women playing football is a form of everyday resistance because they play football while being female, and thus resist the dominant norms that are associated with football. As time goes by, it slowly becomes more acceptable for women to play football, as we see with the growing popularity of women's football. However, many women who play football do so

<sup>77</sup> Isard, Melton, and Macaulay, "Women's Sport and Everyday Resistance," 4.

for their own enjoyment, rather than with the aim of changing the policies that govern women's football.

First, this chapter will look at women's football as everyday resistance and how this has influenced and changed the existing power structures and social norms within the sport. Then, it will analyse how women's football as everyday resistance has impacted how women's football is governed. It will do so in chronological order: First it will analyse women's football in the 1920s, then the 1970s, followed by the 1990s and lastly women's football today.

### Women's football as everyday resistance and its influence on power structures and social norms

Following Johansson and Vinthagen's framework to analyse women's football as everyday resistance, as presented and explained in table 1, we can establish that in all time periods this thesis will analyse, the repertoire is women playing football. Furthermore, as a subsection of the relationship of agents, the actor is a woman. These two dimensions remain unchanged over the various time periods discussed. The remaining dimensions, however, are dependable on the unique circumstances of the various time periods and will therefore be specified and fleshed out when analysing women's sport as everyday resistance during the different time periods

During the early 1920s, women's football was banned in multiple countries in Europe, most notably in England, but also in Scotland, Germany, Spain, and France. With associated men's teams not being allowed to lend their pitches to women's teams in England, women had less opportunity to play higher profile games on higher quality pitches that were previously used for their popular charity matches. Despite this, women continued to play football, albeit on a smaller scale.

During the 1920s, following the end of the First World War, the dominant call for gender roles to be re-established led to many women returning to their homes to be housewives after they supported the war effort by replacing their husbands in the factories. Yet some women continued to play football in combination with picking up the role of housewife again. The relationship of agents, consisting of actor, target, and observer, can be established on the base of this changing dynamic. The actor, as established, is the woman. The target, then, is the ban restriction the opportunities for women who want to play football, in addition to the expectation that women should stay in the home. Lastly, the observers consist of those who have previously



watched the women's charity games, as well as the teams who had previously lent their pitches to the women's teams.

Spatialisation concerns the social spaces we exist in. An example of spatialisation can therefore be the football field and its associated socio-cultural rules, which often are masculine and male dominated. Additionally, the female body can be considered to be a form of spatialisation – the female body has been limited in space compared to men, for example by being expected to be housewives and stay in the home rather than venturing outside of the home. The home was a female domain, one where men had limited or no say at all. Similarly, the football field was a male domain, where women had a marginalised role, if any role at all. Due to the masculine nature of the sport, women were therefore not expected nor encouraged to be on the field, ensuring the football field remained a male domain.

In terms of temporalisation, the return to pre-war gender roles following the end of the First World War was the main influence that dictated and re-established football as a men's sport. During the First World War, with the men being on the front lines and away from home, women's football had gained popularity. By returning the women to the home, and barring them for easily accessing football fields, the temporalisation of the early 1920s ensured that football was an inappropriate way for women to spend their time. The time of returning to traditional gender roles following the war was thus an essential factor leading to the ban of women's football, and consequently the form of everyday resistance that female footballers performed.

Taking the Dick, Kerr Ladies as an example of women playing football during the 1920s, the women who played for the team demonstrated everyday resistance by continuing to play football despite the ban and restrictions put on women's football. Firstly, they were women who played football, a sport that was considered inherently masculine. By playing football, they were going against the social norms that excluded and marginalised them, as well as the norms of the sport that subjugated them, such as the idea that only men should play football, and that women who played football could suffer from infertility due to playing the sport. Secondly, the Dick, Kerr Ladies broke the social norms that were in place on the football field simply by playing on the field while being female, and consequently rejecting the idea that the football field is a masculine space. Lastly, the women defied against what was deemed an appropriate way for them to spend their time. Instead of tending to the home and their children, they spent some evenings on the football field, going against the idea of what women were supposed to do for fun.

Hence, the Dick, Kerr Ladies resisted the dominant social norms and power structures simply by defying the ban put in place by the FA and continuing to play football during the 1920s, despite lower turnout and more difficulty to find decent football fields to play on during the ban. Particularly following the First World War, where women found their place outside of the home to support the war effort, to then being encouraged to return to the home afterwards, women wanting to continue their activities outside of the home is a logical consequence. By participating in something considered to be so inherently masculine, and outside of the home, the Dick, Kerr Ladies – and all other female footballers – exercised a form of everyday resistance by playing football in their spare time.

During the 1970s, the view on women's football shifted. In England, the FA lifted the ban on women's football in 1971, with the rest of the bans in Europe being lifted around the same time. As a consequence, football became more accessible to women who wanted to participate in the sport. It was not as widely expected for women to be housewives and stay in the home to take care of the husband and kids. Women who had work outside the home was increasingly common. Yet, women playing football remained a small group, and despite the lift of the ban, the football associations did little to promote women's football and increase the accessibility to the sport.

Women playing football during the 1970s used football as everyday resistance to target the idea that although women were allowed to venture outside of the home, there would be no explicit effort to welcome them into the male world of football. While the rulebook had changed, the effort to welcome and include women had not. The observers, too, had shifted. Now, women were allowed to play on men's pitches, which would garner the attention of those who would watch games on those pitches. However, despite the lift of the ban, men's teams often did not lend their fields to the women, and thus the observers remained limited. Despite this, the Copa 71 did bring a new audience to women's football, as the tournament was very well received in Mexico, gaining an enlarged group of observers during the Copa 71.

The spatialisation of women's football during the 1970s had also somewhat shifted. Many women had left the house and were therefore often found in spaces outside of the home. However, there were a few prominent voices that claimed women belonged on the football field even before the lift of the FA ban. The founding of the WFA in England in 1969, and the UEFA recommendation of member states to recognise women's football that same year shows that some did think that women are welcome on the football pitch. Furthermore, the idea that football led to infertility in women was proved to be false, and therefore not used as a reason

anymore. In addition to this, the reluctance of men's teams to allow women to play games on their fields gave a clear message that women should not play the game, implying that the football field was not a suitable place for women.

Regarding the temporalisation of women's football, the shift of social norms and shifts in the dynamics of family life impacted who was allowed to play football. It was more acceptable for women to venture outside of the home and pick up hobbies that did not involve housekeeping. Yet, despite women increasingly choosing to be more active outside of the home, football was still largely considered to be a male domain. Consequently, the overarching belief remained that women did not belong on the football field and should be participating in activities that were considered more feminine.

Despite the ingrained belief that football is inherently masculine, and therefore not appropriate for women, multiple large women's tournaments were hosted during the 1970s. The Copa 71 is the biggest example of this.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, countries founded national women's teams, albeit often unofficial teams. As such, England formed an unofficial women's team for the Copa 71. Furthermore, the founding of the WFA showed the willingness of women to become a part of the formal football world, despite not being welcome by everyone. Therefore, while the circumstances surrounding women's football has changed since the 1920s, women are still exercising everyday resistance by continuing to play football. Football is still considered to be a men's sport, and women playing football is still not thought of as appropriate.

Today, women's football is growing more popular than ever. In several countries we see women outperforming the men's teams, and female athletes gain increased attention from media and fans. Yet, women playing football practice a form of everyday resistance. In many cases, women today are free to choose what they do and how they spend their time. Women can now be professional athletes and get paid a liveable wage and are able to do so because of the forms of everyday resistance the women during the 1920s, 1970s, and all the other years women have continued to play football. Still, women continue to use women's football as everyday resistance today.

Now, the target remains the norms that dictate that football is a men's sport, albeit to a lesser degree than was thought previously. However, many still claim that women who play football are less than men who play football, and that women lack skill, despite sometimes obtaining better results than their male counterparts. Women are still being marginalised within the sport,

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<sup>78</sup> Dunn, "The Forgotten," 68.

despite the acceptance of women playing football has changed. Additionally, the group of observers has increased. Now, reports on women's football and female footballers are often available in mainstream media, which consequently leads to information about the sport reaching a larger audience. Additionally, with the increased popularity of the sport, more people are watching the sport and following their favourite athletes.<sup>79</sup>

Spatialisation of women's football today has had a dramatic shift since the 1970s. Today, women playing football has become more widely accepted. In many European countries, women have equal rights as men, and are thus free to choose how to spend their time without restrictions. Women are regularly seen playing on the same fields as men. However, professional women's teams often have their own fields, and are only occasionally allowed to use the fields used by the corresponding men's team. Often, the fields that the women have access to is of lesser quality than the men's fields. This highlights that although women's football has made a giant leap in availability, accessibility and acceptance, there is still an underlying message that women should not play on the men's domain. Thus, there is still a way to go until the idea that only men should regularly play in the big stadiums is eliminated.

The temporalisation of women's football has changed drastically during the last few decades. Today, the general belief is that men and women should have equal opportunities. Many therefore believe that men and women should have the same opportunities within football. However, there is a group of people who believe that women's football is still inferior to men's football, and therefore, women should not be allowed to have the same opportunities as their male counterparts. Many still believe football is a male domain. Despite this, female footballers have more opportunities now than they had a few decades ago, which is visible through the increased activism that female footballers promote through their growing acceptance and consequently growing platform.

We can therefore see that although women's football has become increasingly accepted and accessible today, there are still scenarios where women play football is a form of everyday resistance. Football is still a male domain, and women are still only secondary players rather than equal participants in the sport. However, with the increased popularity and acceptance of women's football, everyday acts such as playing football as a woman becomes less impactful than in previous years, when playing football as a woman was explicitly frowned upon. What

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<sup>79</sup> Pope, "Who Could Name an England Women's Footballer?," 141.

we see happening today, as a result, is female footballers using their platform to advocate for women's rights, such as gender equality between men and women who play football.<sup>80</sup>

#### Women's football as everyday resistance and its effects on sports governance

Prior to the ban on women's football during the 1920s, women's football was highly popular due to various factors. These include the lack of male football due to the war, the charity purposes of the women's game, as well as the health benefit of regular exercise for the female workforce. Not only did these factors add to the popularity of the sport, but women enjoyed playing football. However, with the expectation of the return to pre-war gender roles during the late 1910s and early 1920s, the governing bodies played an active part in how women's football would be restricted and perceived for the next five decades by the large majority.

While the charitable aspect of women's football was one of the main reasons why women's football was so popular prior to the ban in 1921, the FA used this against the women who raised money through playing football, accusing them of keeping a percentage for themselves. Additionally, the assumed inferiority and fragility of the female body was a central argument in their reasoning to prohibit women from playing football. The declaration by the FA in December 1921 was therefore quite shocking, not only due to the accusations of monetary embezzlement, but also because of the claim that women's body are unsuitable for the sport:

Complaints having been made as to football being played by women, Council feel impelled to express their strong opinion that the game is quite unsuitable for females and should not be encouraged. Complaints have also been made as to the conditions under which some of the matches have been arranged and played, and the appropriation of receipts to other than charitable objects. The Council are further of the opinion that an excessive proportion of the receipts are absorbed in expenses and an inadequate percentage devoted to charitable objects. For these reasons the Council requests the Clubs belonging to the Association refuse the use of their grounds for such matches.<sup>81</sup>

The goal of the FA's governance during this time is very clear – women should not play football. The accusation of the misplacement of the charitable funds that the women's game raised posed as a legitimate reason for concern and was therefore used by the FA as a primary reason as to

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<sup>80</sup> Celia Valiante, "Elite Athlete Activism for Gender Equality in Sport: Women's Football in Spain," in *Athlete Activism: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Rory Magrath (Taylor & Francis, 2022), 109–19, 110; Welford, "Outsiders on the Inside," 105.

<sup>81</sup> Dunn, "The Myth," 28-29.

why the ban on women's football was imposed. This serious allegation, however, overshadowed another reason why the FA did not want women to play football – they simply believed football was not suitable for women, as women were too fragile for the physical sport. The perceived physical weakness of women's bodies, in combination with the belief that women should return to the home, dominated the governance of women's football not only in England, but also in other European countries, such as Scotland, Germany, Spain and France.

Following the ban on women's football during the 1920s, the main form of women's football as everyday resistance was the continuation of women playing football despite the restrictions that were put in place to discourage them from stepping onto the football pitch. The FA's primary form of governance was the prohibition imposed on its member clubs to allow women playing football, and further using the dominant social norm dictating that women belong in the home to justify this ban. Additionally, the dominant power structure at the time dictated that men held most, if not all, of the power, and women were thus considered to be less than men. This is in line with the patriarchy, the dominant power structure that has lasted multiple centuries, in which men hold most of the power, and women are largely excluded from holding power and decision-making.<sup>82</sup> As a result, patriarchy reinforces and reproduces gender norms. The ban, in combination with the return to pre-war gender roles, therefore strengthened the patriarchal structures and gender norms that the ban by the FA further reinforced.

Leading up to the 1970s, there was a shift in the perception of women's football. In 1969, 48 member clubs formed the Women's Football Association (WFA), despite not being allowed to play on the men's grounds and not being sanctioned by the FA.<sup>83</sup> In January 1971 the WFA applied for affiliation with the FA, which was rejected by the FA. This is despite the UEFA recommending its member states to recognise women's football and take control of the female branch of the sport the same year.<sup>84</sup> However, this meeting between the FA Council and the WFA meant that the FA officially acknowledged women's football in England. Thus, regardless of the rejection of affiliation with the WFA, the FA did rescind the 1921 ban that outlawed the

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<sup>82</sup> Mikael Baaz, Mona Lilja, and Stellan Vinthagen, "Defining and Analysing 'Resistance': Possible Entrances to the Study of Subversive Practices," in *Researching Resistance and Social Change: A Critical Approach to Theory and Practice* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018), 34–55, 46.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Dunn and Welford, "The FAWSL's Context," 12; Pope, "'Who Could Name an England Women's Footballer?'," 128; Jean Williams, "A Grass Ceiling: Women's Football in England," in *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 111–56, 139.

use of their affiliated men's pitches the same year.<sup>85</sup> This affiliation with the FA, in turn, allowed the women to build connections with UEFA and FIFA, which led to the creation of the first official England women's team.<sup>86</sup> Only in 1993 did the WFA vote for the FA to take over its activities.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, the social norms had changed drastically in the last five decades. Women were no longer expected to stay in the home, and therefore had more freedom to be active outside of the home.

With the FA refusing to recognise women's football as a legitimate part of the sport, the establishment of the WFA by forty-eight member clubs was a push to centralise the governance of women's football. The main aims of the WFA were split in two conflicting goals: To increase participation in the sport, or to increase competitiveness and professionalism.<sup>88</sup> These two goals are conflicting due to one of the big questions in women's football: Should women's football be separate or integrate with men's football?<sup>89</sup> By increasing competitiveness and professionalism, women's football would adopt the pyramid system that is common in men's football, with leagues that include relegation and promotion between different levels of football. However, those who advocated for increased participation were less concerned with replicating the men's game, and more interested in promoting the sport for women. Here we can see a shift forming in the governance of women's football and which direction it should go, one that is still heavily discussed today.

Women's football gained increased attention, and so the way it was viewed and subsequently governed shifted. Rather than adopting a stance that women's bodies cannot handle the physicality of football, there is a shift to an acceptance of women participating in the sport, despite a prevailing hesitance to actively promote women's football. The shift in the governance of women's football reflects a shift in social norms and power structures at the time. Women had a larger role in how women's football was governed, in part due to women venturing outside of the home. While men still dominate football and the governance of football, the establishment of the WFA and the recommendation by the UEFA for its member states to recognise women's football show that women who play football are slowly gaining more power within the world of football.

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<sup>85</sup> Carrie Dunn, "The Photograph," in *"Unsuitable for Females": The Rise of the Lionesses and Women's Football in England* (Edinburgh: Arena Sport, 2023), 38–55, 45; Pope, "'Who Could Name an England Women's Footballer?'" 128.

<sup>86</sup> Dunn, "The Photograph," 45.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Welford, "Outsiders on the Inside," 106.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

When the FA and other European countries lifted the ban on the use of its members' football fields by women's teams, we see a further shift in the acceptance of the space women occupy on the football field. It signifies that women are accepted on the football field, rather than confined to areas outside of football. Despite the lift of the ban, however, the FA did not take control of women's football per UEFA's recommendation, and so the governance of women's football remains limited in scope and reach. Yet it represents the shift in social norms, where we see women being able to do more outside of the home, which now includes playing on the same football fields as men.

Today, women's football is more popular than ever, with more girls and women playing at all levels, and more people watching the women's game than ever before. Across Europe, many countries have established professional women's leagues, and the national teams are performing better and more closely than ever before, which means that the teams and countries are becoming more competitive. At the most recent FIFA Women's World Cup in 2023, thirty-two teams competed, compared to the previous twenty-four. FIFA's Women's Football Strategy outlines the aims for the growth of the sport, which can be considered successful looking at the past few years. The 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France broke attendance records, and the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup broke viewing and engagement records across the globe, testifying to the increased popularity of women's football. On a global level, we can see that a change in FIFA's approach to the governance in women's football by trying to make it more accessible and encouraging girls to play at a grassroots level.

Additionally, UEFA's goal of improving the popularity of and participation in the sport has also succeeded – with the newly created Women's Nations League, which will determine which countries will be represented at the Olympics, there are increasingly more opportunities to engage with women's football in Europe. Furthermore, the number of member states that have women managing women's football is increasing every year, with 32 women holding senior positions by March 2023.<sup>90</sup> Here we can see a clear shift in the governance of women's football. More member states are managing women's football separately, and more women are involved in the governance of women's football. This shift in governance signifies an increased focus on women's football, which consequently leads to improvements within the sport, such as more financing, participation, and competitiveness.

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<sup>90</sup> "Football Development: Women's Football," UEFA, March 22, 2023, <https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/football-development/womens-football/>.



While the governance of women's football is changing rapidly, there are still issues that remain. Despite the improvements and changes to social norms and power structures, where women have more freedom to spend their time how they want, the patriarchy is still the overarching structure that generally defines how society works. A recent example is the incident between the Spanish national women's team and their coach, Jorge Vilda. Several women of Spain's national team announced that they would not be available for selection for the national team for the 2023 World Cup due to disagreements with the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) and Jorge Vilda.<sup>91</sup> While it was never made public what the specificities of the disagreements were, the players cited a lack of professionalism.<sup>92</sup> On top of this, following Spain's victory at the 2023 World Cup final, RFEF president Luis Rubiales kissed Spanish player Jenni Hermosa on the lips, claiming it was friendly and in the heat of the moment due to the excitement of the victory.<sup>93</sup> Receiving immense backlash for his actions, Rubiales initially refused to apologise, claiming that the relationship between him and Hermosa was befitting the action. Hermosa, however, acknowledged that the kiss was unwanted. Still, Rubiales insisted on the friendly nature of the kiss, until he was suspended from all football-related activities by FIFA's Disciplinary Committee after internal investigations.<sup>94</sup> As a consequence, Vilda was also fired as coach of the Spanish women's team but was shortly after hired as Morocco's new coach for the women's team.<sup>95</sup>

This example shows that although there are changes happening in the governance of women's football, there are still issues within the institutions that are difficult to eradicate. Power structures where presidents of football associations think their actions are of little consequence still exist, which may be reinforced by the patriarchy. Not only does this undermine the accomplishments of female footballers, but it also undermines the women themselves. While we have come a long way in including women in the governance of football, the game itself, as well as changing social norms and power structures to make women feel

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<sup>91</sup> Sid Lowe, "Mutiny in Spain Squad as 15 Footballers Refuse to Play in Bid to Oust Head Coach," *The Guardian*, September 22, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/sep/23/mutiny-spain-squad-women-football-refuse-play-oust-head-coach-jorge-vilda>.

<sup>92</sup> Pradeep Cattray, "Spain's World Cup Controversy Explained: Why President Luis Rubiales Is under Fire and Refusing to Resign," *CBS Sports*, August 25, 2023, <https://www.cbssports.com/soccer/news/spains-world-cup-controversy-explained-why-president-luis-rubiales-is-under-fire-and-refusing-to-resign/>.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> "The FIFA Disciplinary Committee Provisionally Suspends Luis Rubiales, President of the RFEF," *FIFA*, August 26, 2023, <https://www.fifa.com/legal/media-releases/the-fifa-disciplinary-committee-provisionally-suspends-luis-rubiales>.

<sup>95</sup> "Spain's World Cup-Winning Coach Jorge Vilda Appointed Morocco Manager," *The Guardian*, October 12, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2023/oct/12/spains-world-cup-winning-coach-jorge-vilda-appointed-morocco-manager>.

more welcomed and included, there are still social norms and power structures in place that favour men and undermine women. The big change today, however, is that women have more agency and speak up more often, and are thus able to incite change, as Jenni Hermosa and the Spanish women's team did in response to Luis Rubiales' and Jorge Vilda's actions.

## Conclusion and Discussion

Resistance is essential to encourage change. Without disagreement to the dominant power structures and social norms, the status quo will remain as it is, unchanging. For decades, women have been an important force for change on many levels and in many different areas, from the initial suffragette movement to the 2017 women's march. However, not all forms of resistance are as noticeable as others, yet they too incite change. This thesis aimed to show that everyday resistance is an effective form of resistance, and that women's football as everyday resistance has been effective in promoting change to power structures and social norms, as well as its capability to incite changes in how women's football is governed. Using the framework designed by Vinthagen and Johansson to analyse women's football as everyday resistance during various time periods, the effectiveness of women's football as everyday resistance and its effects of power structures, social norms and football governance can be determined. This was done by asking the following research questions: How does women's football as everyday resistance challenge power structures and gender norms within football, and; How does women's football as everyday resistance affect sports governance regarding women's football in Europe?

This thesis first looked at the history of women's football and how it has evolved during the last century. Based on this, this thesis further determined how women's football as everyday resistance has been used during the 1920s, the 1970s, and today, and consequently how women's football as everyday resistance during these time periods have influenced the power structures and social norms that were in place during the various time periods. While the social norms and power structures were different during the three time periods, a constant has been the repertoire, actor, and target of women's football. Despite what was considered an appropriate way to spend their free time for women, women have continued to play football. What has been changed throughout the time periods are the spatialisation and temporalisation of women's football. These are the two factors that have been driving forces for change in the power structures and social norms that dictate women's football.

Secondly, this thesis looked at how women's football as everyday resistance influenced the governance of women's football. Central to the governance of women's football has been those in power, and with women claiming a larger role on the football fields, as well as shifting social norms and power structures, women have increasingly had a larger role in how women's football is governed. Through resistance and dissatisfaction of how women's football is governed, more women become involved in governance issues within the sport. Furthermore,

as women's football gains more publicity, more people, and women, weigh in with recommendations on how women's football should be governed, and increasingly governing institutions respond by promising to improve the diversity within their governing bodies.

This thesis contributes to the emerging field of resistance studies, in addition to the subfield of everyday resistance. Furthermore, it adds to the growing body of research on women's football as women's football gains popularity and attention. By combining women's football and everyday resistance, this thesis attempts to make evident the importance of small, concealed actions of resistance. In addition to the more publicised overt actions and statements by more outspoken footballers or public figures that are widely publicised by media outlets, it is essential to acknowledge all levels of resistance and its effects, despite it being lesser known or recognised.

There are a few points of consideration and limitations to take into consideration. First, the scope of this thesis is limited. Women's football as everyday resistance is unique in every country and every region, as every country has a unique set of power structures and norm. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the analysis and conclusions of this thesis are not necessarily relevant in all parts of the world. Furthermore, this thesis has focused on the role women have played in resisting power structures and social norms. Men have not been considered, yet there have been men who have been part in promoting and improving women's football. Additionally, with the shifting social norms and power structures that have occurred in Europe during the past century, it is not only women's football as everyday resistance that has been responsible for the changes that have been discussed in this thesis. However, due to the scope of this thesis, it is unattainable to discuss additional essential factors that have contributed to changes in power structures, social norms, and the governance of women's football.

This thesis is thus an exploratory case study on the changes on women's football in Europe, and how this is brought on by the everyday actions of women. Thus, this thesis provides a starting point from which women's football and everyday resistance can be combined as women's football as everyday resistance. With increased attention on the progress of women's football, it is essential to know the various factors that have led to this, and who have been participants, whether proactively or simply by enjoying the sport in their free time.

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