Fan Power: the FA Premier League, Fandom and Cultural Contestation in the 1990s

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by

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REX NASH

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Abstract

This research considers the nature of Independent Supporters Associations (ISAs) at professional English football clubs: it analyses the reasons for their spectacular growth in the 1990s, and specifically how far the commercialisation of football in England in the 1990s is responsible for that growth. It is argued that, in most cases, the specific nature of the transformation of the sport in that decade is not the spark behind the creation of these fan groups, and that the fortunes of the team (rather than 'political' or 'cultural' considerations of the nature of football or the nature of fandom) remain crucial to the development and long-term operation of supporter groups.

The hypothesis that ISAs are the response of the working class fans who face exclusion from football, or are increasingly alienated as it is transformed and so legitimates a different conception of fandom, is tested, and found wanting. ISAs are the contextualised product of the 1990s created by a given combination of sections of two economic classes, reflecting their cultural values, but not dedicated to their specific ends. The particular sub-culture that each ISA represents is analysed and located in relation to dominant commercial football values, and the nature of resistance and contestation to the modern football project is examined. It will be shown that ISA sub-culture does resist in some important ways modern football values.

Glossary of Terms

AGM - Annual General Meeting

BAB - Businessmen Against the Board

BIFA - Blades Independent Fans Association

CSISG - Community Stadium Independent Support Group

EGM - Extraordinary/Emergency General Meeting

FA - Football Association

FAPL - FA Premier League

FIFA - Federation International de Football Associations

FSA - Football Supporters' Association

HCC - Hampshire County Council

IMUSA - Independent Manchester United Supporters Association

INUSA - Independent Newcastle United Supporters Association

ISA - Independent Supporter Association

LCFC - Leicester City Football Club

LCISA - Leicester City Independent Supporters Association

NFFSC - National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs

NUFC - Newcastle United Football Club

PFA - Professional Footballers Association

PPV - Pay Per View

SC - Supporter Club

SFC - Southampton Football Club

SISA - Southampton Independent Supporters Association

SUFC - Sheffield United Football Club

Chapter One: Introduction

The main focus and objective in this study is to critically examine the response of organised football fans to changes in English football in the 1990s, focusing on Independent Supporters Associations (ISAs). At a more conceptual level, the study engages with concepts of class and cultural contestation, analysed within the changing paradigms of the sport, its penetration by business processes and entrepreneurs and its development into something approximating to a business. The primary purpose is to conceptualise the rise of ISAs during the 1990s, and examine the connections between that development and the changing nature of football in England. Within that context, one has to ask, what is it that fans within ISAs wish to achieve? At an organisational level, what methods do ISAs employ to promote themselves and their activities, and how are they structured? Are ISAs pragmatic, or do they adhere to, and seek to defend, non-negotiable core (as it were, 'political') positions? Put differently, are they ideologically inflexible? Within the context of other supporter groups (the Football Supporters Association (FSA) and the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs (NFFSC)), the analysis addresses how far ISAs accept football's new ideologies, and how far their rise in the 1990s can be linked to class: to what extent are ISAs the response of the traditional, working class male fan to his disenfranchisement from a sport he once 'owned', and a defence of working class interests as the game is transformed?

Academia and football

For years, the study of sport (and football) lacked academic credibility: the first forays by academics into the area of football came with Taylor in 1971, followed by a whole range of theories about hooliganism, particularly from the state-sponsored Leicester school. This paradigm dominated football academia until the late 1980s, when interest in football culture developed; Redhead addressed fan culture, Bale theorised the nature of place and placelessness in sport, Jary, Horne and Bucke considered the relationship between fan culture and dominant culture, Giulianotti the carnivalesque

elements of support, Sugden and Tomlinson focused on the nature of FIFA and the world game, Williams deserted the Leicester school's Eliasian paradigm and considered the media, TV and globalisation, while a focus on fan groups developed primarily through the work of Rogan Taylor. Interest in the mid-1990s has focused on consumption and post-Fordism (King), football's changing political and economic paradigms (Lee, Williams), the role of TV (Ian Taylor), modernisation (Duke), fanzines (Haynes and Moorhouse), the changed political economy of football in the 1990s (Lee, Williams), and identity in general (Giulianotti and Armstrong), though Armstrong also produced very strong anthropological research on Sheffield United 'hooligans'. The present research is within the context of fan culture, fan groups and class. Since ISAs are increasingly intervening in the decision-making processes of top clubs, this work seeks to contribute to sociological/cultural debates about the role of fans within the game, the nature of class within that, and the response of working class fans to cultural and financial exclusion, or active withdrawal in the face of cultural change, and to an understanding of fan groups in the 1990s within the context of the wider history of supporter groups.

Cultural Contestation

Cultural contestation, starting from the premise that there are a range of distinct conceptions of fandoms, and that only one conception is preferred and sustained by football's hierarchy, is central to this analysis. Moreover, these conceptions of fandom can be mutually exclusive and antagonistic, and, broadly speaking, each corresponds to a certain class culture, or view of a class culture. Jary, Horne and Bucke offer a strong exposition of cultural contestation within football,[1] arguing that certain elements of early 1990s football culture, notably fanzines, represent attempts to contest and resist football's strengthening commercial paradigms, defend values other than those supported by official culture, and offer alternative views of how football can be organised. They conclude that fanzines act as "site[s] of 'resistance' through and in sport to cultural and commercial hegemony",[2] expressing,

[1] Jary, Horne and Bucke 1991
[2] ibid., page 583

celebrating and defending conceptions of fandom opposed to dominant values, including a desire to stop football shifting from its traditional roots.

This view assumes an oppositional stance that juxtaposes various schools of fandom, the new commercial mentality with 'traditional' values that reject the construction of football as a business opportunity: while there are dangers in assuming rigid distinctions between various schools of fandom, it is clear that 1990s football culture does involve a battle between fan traditions and ideologies, centred notably around 'modernisation',[3] itself an ideological construct and, as Jary, Horne and Bucke importantly note, not some simple alignment with modern reality. Recent changes have been portrayed by governments and the football industry as almost necessary stages in a logical progression, yet, on every significant issue in the 1990s, a range of genuine options were available, but the choices were determined by political and economic considerations, which decisions, in turn, narrowed the range of possibilities, privileged certain views and to that measure, determined the new conceptions of fandom.[4]

The idea of contestation is useful in that it enables the theorisation of the cultural positions of individual ISAs and their relationship with official fandom, within an abstract broad spectrum of fan values ranging from 'traditional' to 'new'. As ISA values move through this spectrum towards new spectators, so they approach dominant FA Premier League (FAPL) values and conceptions of fandom. It may well be that that ISA positions do not fit comfortably into neat boxes, and that the world-view of each school of fandom contains some positions that contest modern values and some that do not. Nonetheless, contestation allows for the factors that mediate the relationship between ISA sub-culture and official FAPL culture to be theorised. Jary, Horne and Bucke apply the concept to fanzines, but it is equally applicable to supporter groups: like fanzines, fan groups develop institutional voices, attract interest on the basis of the views they support, and expound specific views on certain issues

[3] Duke 1994
[4] Partly analysed by King 1997b, addressing the consumer paradigm and de-politicisation of football.

and a sense of the sort of fans they want to represent. Even allowing for the inevitable unevenness in a fan group's culture, its general world-view can be constructed, and thus the nature of contestation identified and theorised. Research into other fan groups has implicitly addressed such matters: Taylor's history of the NFFSC[5] highlights its active support for official discourses and rejection of calls for greater 'militancy', and therefore the points of divergence and convergence between it and dominant values. Equally, work into the FSA[6] allows the group's relationship with dominant culture to be identified, providing some data for a general assessment of the nature of contestation with the game's dominant values.

Not all analysts are convinced though: Russell argues that fanzines "have rarely threatened the ultimate set of power relationships within the game, and indeed in many cases have never really sought to do so".[7] Yet to assume that fanzines or fan groups are capable of altering the power balance within football exaggerates their power: while Jary, Horne and Bucke argue that fanzines can help redefine the paradigms within which the supporters operate, it is unrealistic to expect them to challenge the clubs or the Football Association, or the commercial power in football. More importantly, the outcome of fanzine or fan group campaigning should not be allowed to blur, or distract attention from, the fact that fans did organise themselves for various purposes. Russell's conceptualisation is thus right, but he concentrates excessively on the outcome, rather than the fact and nature of activism. It is equally plausible that after the first four or five years of the FSA, when fans were able to influence policy towards football, the fanzine movement recognised the futility of attempts to take control of the game, and recognised the enormous odds stacked against such an attempt, thus explaining their apparent lack of ambition to challenge "the ultimate set of power relationships within the game".[8]

[5] Taylor R 1992
[6] Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research 1989
[7] Russell 1997, page 234
[8] ibid.

Moorhouse[9] argues that Jary, Horne and Bucke exaggerate the significance of fanzines, view them with an unacceptable rose-tinted vision and glibly attribute success to their operations, concluding that fanzines represent a failure to accept the forces re-shaping football. Some of these caveats are valid. As there is no accepted duration which a shift in paradigm would have to last to 'qualify' as success, a time-frame has to be established before assertions of successful contestation can be made. More importantly, how is success to be measured? Furthermore, there is also the problem of over-emphasising the level of self-consciousness with which fan groups or fanzines approach the cultural landscape of football and the level of political motivation involved. The context in which organised resistance occurs, and how that resistance ebbs and flows with time and changes in circumstance, are crucial to a 'full' understanding of the various and diverse motives involved, and the cultural significance that can then be accorded to such resistance.

Moorhouse is also right to note some of the less than progressive features of fanzine culture, but ultimately all that this demonstrates is the need for greater critical application of contestation. Since his sample concentrates on fanzines with highly specific features not common to the movement generally, it is unclear how far this analysis contributes to wider discussions. Analysing fanzines with strongly sectarian Protestant/Unionist and Catholic identities as the basis for argument about the movement and contestation hardly seems the best way to theorise the generality of the critical factors involved. Horne notes, for instance, how this sample does not allow for concrete conclusions, and how fanzines do have the potential to be socially progressive in ways that Moorhouse entirely dismisses.[10] Moorhouse argues that Jary, Horne and Bucke's theory has very little applicability to Scottish fanzines and football culture generally, but his theory has equally limited applicability to English fanzines, or fanzines generally.

Other work, that avoids such unrepresentative titles, highlights the positive

[9] Moorhouse 1994
[10] Horne 1995

and the inclusive in fanzine culture: Giulianotti notes how Aberdeen fanzines explicitly reject the sectarian world-view (and *raison d'être*) of Celtic and Rangers, and draws attention (as Moorhouse demands) to their diverse responses to the forces reshaping football.[11] Ultimately, Moorhouse demonstrates little more than the need for care with the sample of titles analysed, and for clear definitions and conceptualisations. In a later piece, however,[12] he seeks to eliminate such discourses altogether from academic research, and instead accepts, and then focuses on, football's transformation. Such an approach is clearly flawed, and would, indeed, leave much of the business of football unexplained.[13] Reluctance to attribute success does not invalidate contestation as an explanatory tool, as measured success or failure does not negate the significance of contestation in the first place. Indeed, contestation that actually continues beyond a clear point of defeat is indeed of special interest and potential significance. The intention in such analysis would be to identify the extent and nature of ISA resistance to the modern game's preferred concepts, and the extent to which ISA culture can be related to traditional working class football culture (traditionality), or the defence of working class interests at football.

Meanwhile, in an important recent work, King highlights the excessive rigidity in many applications of resistance, and demonstrates how processes of resistance and compliance can not only operate simultaneously, but how compliance with certain processes can deepen other forces that are already the subject of resistance.[14] King's work challenges sociologists to treat the culture of the oppressed as not some neatly compartmentalised and consistent value-system but, rather, as a complex amalgam of a range of elements, that, when combined in order to form a world-view, do not necessarily fit neatly together. But despite his suggestion to the contrary, this work does suffer to some extent from the evident exceptionalism of Manchester United, particularly in respect of the mentality built up amongst

[11] Guilianotti 1997
[12] Moorhouse 1998
[13] Nash 1999
[14] King 1997a

United fans that appears, in many instances, to set them apart.[15] While all top clubs are engaging in the processes at Old Trafford that King analyses, United are considerably more developed in this area than anyone else, which will again shape the nature of responses by fans.

But in highlighting the fragmented and fragmentary nature of resistance, and by demonstrating the need to identify the precise and specific nature of fan attitudes, and their relation to official culture and the points at which they converge and diverge, King imposes an important qualification on the application of the concept. Such an approach will crucially highlight those issues on which contestation is present, and the extent to which these can be related to class and the defence of (real or perceived) class interests. Despite these problems, cultural contestation can be applied to responses to the FAPL, particularly if the latter is conceptualised as a project aimed at shifting the nature of football and fandom. It is by no means fanciful to argue that FAPL clubs are seeking to recreate fandom around lifestyle and consumption, and that once live Pay-Per-View (PPV) coverage is widely available, a new breed of spectator , based on home-centred TV consumption, will come into being. These spectators may have little or no emotive link with past generations, and no affinity for (or comprehension of) their actions and attitudes. The FA foresaw such a day in their *Blueprint for the Future of Football*, a future that was significantly to be centred around home-based consumption of the game.[16]

Prior to settling on contestation, hegemony was considered as an explanatory tool. For a time, hegemony enjoyed considerable vogue within sports sociology[17] and also invited much critical comment:[18] Morgan attacks the slipperiness of hegemony and the inevitability of the conclusions in works

[15] The Manchester United fanzine *Red Issue* is, for instance, nationally renowned for its scatological and abusive manner, and United fans in general for their reluctance to work with fans of other clubs. Some of the attitudes that King analyses fit this context, and contribute to some of the paradoxes uncovered.
[16] Football Association 1991
[17] Hargreaves 1986, 1992a
[18] MacAloon 1992

based on it, [19] while King expresses doubts over the excessively coherent positions of resistance and negotiation involved.[20] Superficially, it has considerable explanatory import, especially in highlighting class and the interests of capital – a point of considerable interest in view of the changing class audience of football, but it is beset with problems that contestation successfully avoids. It is only possible to assert – rather than *demonstrate* – a deliberate attempt by top clubs to move football's ideology and fandom from working class norms and to show how traditional fans are affected; it is impossible to demonstrate that this process is deliberately aimed against working class fans, rendering the conceptualisation of the hegemonic project simply inadequate: whereas Hargreaves[21] can offer clear evidence of the class-based nature of state projects against working class leisure and sport in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is not possible to do the same for modern football. This is not a problem for the more flexible concept of contestation: in so far that a shift of a certain order can be demonstrated, contestation can accommodate the theorisation of responses to it, eliminating the issue of consciousness and the need to show who is directing the hegemonic policy and how. Equally, hegemony does not seem easily to accommodate the changing nature of class and class cultures, and the changing relationship between capitalism, the state and class within the post-Fordist global service economy.

Traditionality and new spectators

> 'Many no longer attended, as admission prices increased and forms of carnivalesque behaviour were surveyed even more. At times 150 would gather in pubs, minutes from Bramall Lane, only to watch their team on satellite TV... not for them the media-induced hyperbole and hysteria around the game: they became detached; they loved the game, but knew a rip-off when they saw one'.[22]

> 'From the fans' perspective, the whole experience of being an English football supporter in the 1990s has become an increasingly expensive, passive and individualistic experience'.[23]

[19] Morgan 1994
[20] King 1997a
[21] Hargreaves 1986
[22] Armstrong 1998, page 322
[23] Lee 1998, page 33

Fandom is neither fixed nor uncontested, and the history of football involves a range of forms of expression and values. Mason notes that many fans would choose which match to watch on the basis of the players expected to appear, which actively encouraged clubs to invest heavily in stars.[24] There was often little club loyalty or identification, but instead a desire for excitement and success. Woolwich Arsenal moved from Plumstead to Highbury in 1913 in an attempt to attract more fans, indicating that loyalty was slow in developing,[25] while gates at Liverpool increased in 1892 by 750% after the club recruited eleven Scottish players and started winning games.[26] Mellor has found evidence of *regional* fan loyalty in Lancashire in the 1950s, where fans owned season tickets from different clubs and identified with regions rather than clubs.[27] But this apparent lack of loyalty or identification should not obscure the fact that certain clubs (like Aston Villa) were already seeing a close fan identification, that was often translated into violence towards referees, opposing supporters and players.[28]

There have been different and concurrent models of fandom, and no one model can be viewed as historically more valid than any other. Moreover, tradition alone would be less than an adequate base upon which to build a case for the greater validity of any one model. King rightly argues that traditional fans defend a view of the past that was never the historical norm, and may not have existed at all, and that the identity of the 'lads' is fundamentally flawed as a basis for argument about modern football, since the traditions that underpin it were invented or exaggerated, and hence these "claims to traditionalism... cannot be sustained".[29] However, while traditional fans' identity does often pass over the nuances of football's history (the crowd never was uniformly working class), the fact that identity is objectively false is irrelevant to its utterly important subjective validity for those who hold it. It remains *their* identity, which they would defend, and the basis upon which they view football. That fans might be mistaken in seeing the current

[24] Mason 1980
[25] Inglis 1996, page 17
[26] Kelly 1992, page 15
[27] Mellor 1998
[28] Williams, Dunning and Murphy 1988

arrangements in football as a class issue does not, cannot, and ought not to mean that they do not use that view as the basis upon which they engage with the game.

The problems with the identity that in King's conception fans draw from football are essentially the same as many other forms of identity, in and out of football: they draw upon a range of images, historic episodes, myths, prejudices and other cultural fragments, in order to create a whole from romanticised images of an ill-understood or even invented past.[30] Lee notes how traditional constructions of Englishness draw upon images of England and its people that are objectively and factually non-existent or irrelevant to the reality of contemporary life, and how they mask or submerge other aspects of modern reality that do not fit the desired discourse.[31] Such discourses are informed by little more than nostalgia, as in John Major's 1993 discussion of Englishness. Since reality is always changing, all notions of reality and identity are simply snapshots and thus cannot be 'real' or subject to objective analysis. Lee describes the ease with which new traditions and identities are invented and re-invented, how objectively false images persist in popular and elite psyche, and the fictional elements of identity. This is the nature of identity, and to criticise traditional fans for it is to expect something from the concept that it cannot offer. Class cultures and traditions are no different, and are passed on from generation to generation, a process which is not always or easily influenced by the reality of the economy, the state and, as it were, actual class-relations within an increasingly rapidly changing capitalism.

The general conception of class employed here is best summed up by Clement, who argues that "a social class is a group of agents... who share the same interests, social experiences, traditions and value systems, and who tend to act as a class, and define themselves in relation to other groups

[29] King 1997a, page 339
[30] Crichter 1994
[31] Lee 1995

of agents".[32] Such a definition avoids questions of the 'genuine' validity of self-ascription of class status, and depends instead upon cultural and social factors; this obviously has resonance for football fans, since the class-based traditions of fandom are clearly based upon shared experiences and value systems, however these might change over time.

Other forms of football identity, aside from working class traditionalism, are equally problematic: the 'Golden Age' of friendly fandom of the 1950s is clearly a significant exaggeration, while the view of the 1990s new spectator that football has become safer or better[33] is objectively meaningless, firstly because such claims cannot be quantified, and secondly because many such fans lack any personal experience of, or engagements with, pre-1990s football, on which to base any judgement. Fed on a diet of propaganda, hype and sensationalised journalism, it is likely that these spectators often have little personal 'reason' or experience that may form the basis of their beliefs, and instead rely on media images of its past for their views of change. These images are imagined and invented; they are a pastiche of historical events, prejudices, received information and hope. Since it is often argued that these spectators only became interested in football when football became fashionable, it is perfectly possible they view its past with some distaste, and since the shift in the spectator base is one of the most noticeable features of modern football, new fans' views on its past and present should be subject to the same tests and standards as those of traditional fans. All that said, however, their view of football and fandom determines *their* related identity and the basis upon which they will engage with football.

All that can be said about these views and identities is that they are mistaken or partial: what one cannot say is that they cease to form the basis for argument about the present or past of football. Traditional fans (or indeed any others) cannot be expected to wade through the demography and sociology of football to accurately theorise and locate their position within its crowd, and so come to view modern trends with a proper sense of history.

[32] Clement 1995, page 149
[33] Carling 1995

Nor can they be expected to engage with the changing nature of class or class cultures in the post-Fordist economy: attitudes towards class are the product of *lived* experience, not some theorised self-reflexivity. Demonstrable changes in class formations cannot necessarily be translated into changes to the real or lived experience of class as it affects those shut out of the information technology revolution and the flexible and mobile service economy, or those who play on its edges.

This applies equally to the football crowd. While King is right to point out that working class fans were never the sole social group at football, they probably always formed the majority of the crowd until the 1990s, prior to which the clubs had been unable totally to redefine the relative class relations and permitted cultural practices within the ground. That the crowd has always included middle-class supporters cannot logically lead to the view that working class fans were not *de facto* football's foundation. The game's financial dependence on them, particularly prior to the explosion of TV interest, reinforces the working class view that football was 'their' game. Most importantly, football allowed such fans the freedom to express themselves and their values essentially unhindered, *defining the game in their image.* Even if the notion of local working class fans being united in common cause with players and managers is excessively romantic, there was still a sense in which such fans felt that the club respected them and their contribution.[34] In these ways, working class fans can legitimately argue that they contributed to the game in central ways. But for current purposes, the reality of crowd changes over time is less important than the view the fans take: the key question is how far the ISAs represent traditionality and working class fans, how central is the conceptualisation of class and class relations in the modern game in ISA work, and, so, how far ISAs seek to realign football in line with these conceptions of support.

It can be argued that cycles of change in fandom and the crowd have historically been a process of response to wider cultural change, an organic

[34] Edge 1997, Kelly 1993

process not primarily driven by self-conscious attempts at social engineering. This is the crucial feature of the 1990s, when the transformation was driven by hype, marketing and financial and political motivations, which did not actually re-align football as an existing, still in principle, civil society activity, with a complex and commercialised modern society. There is little sense in which these shifts can be seen as an organic response from within football's fans, simply because the new spectators were not present previously. Most have been attracted to football by its transformation and were not especially interested previously, and some maybe even despised football and what it stood for. They are essentially new spectators attracted by new attitudes. The 1920s and 1930s football crowds equally developed modes of ordered, self-disciplined and respectful behaviour that fitted the wider sense of an "improving people",[35] while the youth of the 1960s crowd grew more assertive and independently-minded in line with the spirit of the decade. But these are examples of cultural re-alignment from below – no-one encouraged the 1960s terrace crowd to put football lyrics to popular songs, or appropriate those songs wholesale; it was a collective response to, and usage of, the new popular cultural expressions of the time.[36] Therefore traditional 1960s expression can be seen as an organic 'bottom-up' history, where shifts in behaviour, values and attitudes were potentially genuine re-alignments with wider social mores.

Terrace culture post-Hillsborough was also capable of reforming itself. Redhead neatly captures this new mood, whereby football developed "surrealist inflatable crazes and joyful terrace croons like Manchester City's revival of the 1934 Rodgers and Hart classic Blue Moon", and noting how immediately after Heysel, "the football/indie/dance crossover which took off globally in the late 1980s and early 1990s was very much in its infancy".[37] This new culture drew upon shifts in youth culture (such as 'Madchester') to form a carnivalesque backdrop to many games.[38] Such references clearly locate football, and particularly young terrace fans, within wider popular post-

[35] Russell 1997, pages 120-1
[36] Edge 1997, pages 133-138
[37] Both quotes from Redhead 1991, page 13

modern early 1990s culture, an ironic pastiche of codes and symbols from different eras and cultures and an open expression of values. Thus traditional terrace culture could, and did, redefine itself from 'below'.

Yet this simple point, well documented in academic work,[39] seems to escape some, like Taylor, who argues that the defence of terraces post-Hillsborough was based upon "a 'fantastic' representation of actual terrace culture".[40] This takes no account of either the diversity of change to stadia that was (and remains) possible, nor the *lived* experiences of terrace fans, nor of ways in which they could change some of the values expressed by terrace fans within the terrace culture's context of participation, expression and loyalty. Terrace culture in certain decades did indeed represent racism, sexism and violence, but to argue that this cannot be changed, or indeed had not already changed when Taylor was writing, is myopic and inaccurate. There was already a diversity within terrace culture across the country, with some highly progressive elements visible that were central to acceptable social change within football stadia and schools of fandom (notably the anti-racist work at Leeds United, and the declining racial abuse at Liverpool following the 1987 signing of John Barnes); Hillsborough equally had a very significant impact, resulting in an immediate and noticeable change in atmosphere, rising attendance, declining violence, and the terraces embracing carnivalesque notions and forms of expression. The defence of terraces cannot be simply dismissed as some "fantastic [mis]representation", but must be located within the context of the changed terrace culture. It is also valid to question whether 'modernisation' was *equally* applicable or necessary at every stadium: certain clubs clearly could not stay at their ground (Wimbledon, Bolton, Sunderland, Middlesborough) or had facilities that could not be preserved (Sheffield Wednesday for instance), but it is less clear that Liverpool, Arsenal, Manchester United or Aston Villa had inadequate facilities. There were defenders of terraces and terrace culture (like at Liverpool) who felt that Hillsborough simply could not have happened at their ground *due to specific*

[38] Giulianotti 1991 and 1993
[39] Redhead 1991 and 1993
[40] Taylor I 1995, page 15

design differences, and that therefore 'modernisation' was unnecessary. The anti-seats campaign at Liverpool indeed accepted the need for some change post-Hillsborough, but this change was of a very different order from dominant discourses.[41] To reject this as "nostalgia" or "inertia"[42] takes no account of the diversity of stadia, and therefore the diverse need for stadium redevelopment, nor the actual discourses of opposition amongst fans.[43] Simply dismissing the centrality of atmosphere and participation to certain fans and their experience of match-day is unacceptable.

There is some limited sense in which the FAPL can be seen as an alignment with modern society, but it is ultimately partial and often rejects modern values. The past masculinism and sexism of British society has been transformed into 'new laddism', repackaged as self-ironic cheeky 'fun': this new masculinity does not fit the genteel images of the FAPL, and no doubt would be seen as unacceptable by clubs trying to attract a family audience. Encapsulated by the BBC's *Men Behaving Badly*, satellite channels like *Bravo* and Granada's *Men and Motors*, magazines like *FHM, Boys Toys, Loaded* and *Esquire*, and the Worthington "It's a man thing" adverts, the emphases on beer, status through consumption and wealth, loudness and an open sexism that centrally form modern British male-ness sit very uncomfortably with modern football. This is the dominant British male persona of the late 1990s, and 'talk' about the game in the media openly draws upon it, yet the FAPL and commercialised football at the top end of the sport project an entirely different image of male-ness.

To see the FAPL as a response to modern society ignores the way it not only bypasses some modern trends, but is in many ways their antithesis. An organisation truly aligning itself with modern mores would not be trying to ban 'bad' language. It is also hard to square the implicit view held by FAPL clubs of women with modern female sexuality (loud, aggressive and self-confident). The female culture that generated the *Girlie Show* and *God's Gift* is clearly at

[41] Interview by the author with leader of the 'No Kop Seats' campaign at Liverpool, 1998
[42] Walvin 1994, page 191
[43] Argued to some extent by Brown 1998

odds with the FAPL's genteel family culture and (essentially entirely sexist) view of women as a civilising influence on men, yet it is also the dominant culture of the day that an entire generation of women has bought into. It is also noticeable that the FAPL talks of 'choice', yet offers none over the facilities in stadia, in that everyone sits down. Top division clubs were clearly more than happy with the Major government's all-seater policy, only three publicly expressed any opposition (Chelsea, Tottenham and Blackburn), while others (Nottingham Forest and Manchester United) demolished their terraces long before the deadline. Everton, Liverpool and Aston Villa kept their terraces open until closer to the deadline set by the Government: clearly the modifications made to Goodison, Anfield and Villa Park immediately after Hillsborough were sufficient for these clubs to declare their terraces safe for the five years until the entirely arbitrary deadline of 1994, when the clubs argued that safety arguments meant they would accept all-seater stadia. Yet the fact that the same terraces had been used until 1993 and 1994 respectively leaves the strong suspicion that clubs wanted to eliminate terracing and their social and financial implications, particularly given that when faced with other governmental proposals for change in the mid-1980s (Popplewell[44] and ID cards),[45] clubs mobilised themselves, aligned themselves with fans' groups and the FA and defeated the proposals. No such mobilisation of interests occurred over terraces, despite the hundreds of millions of pounds the policy would cost.

This is even clearer from responses to the possibility raised by the Labour Party in 1997, of allowing terracing back into top division stadia, which met with no enthusiasm from the vast majority of clubs (including those moving to new stadia), despite the technological enhancements to crush barrier design that offer the possibility of creating categorically 'safe' terracing, and the five trouble free years lower division clubs with terraces had enjoyed. Choice of facility was potentially once more on offer to clubs, but none wanted to pass it

[44] The 1986 Popplewell report into the disaster at Bradford, that made a number of recommendations that would have cost the professional game millions of pounds without offering any straightforward of recouping it.
[45] A fan identity card scheme proposed by the Thatcher Government to combat hooliganism, the plan produced enormous opposition from football, and was dropped after Hillsborough.

onto their supporters. Even more tellingly, instructions to stewards at a number of clubs during 1996 and 1997 to prevent fans standing between seats (to the point of threatening to close parts of stadia, like Martin Edwards at Manchester United in 1997) once more suggests a desire to stifle independence amongst fans. This reached the point in 1998 where Old Trafford security staff were accused of assaulting and ejecting standing United fans.[46] As one critic put it, stadium redevelopment post-1989 was predicated on the "premise of attracting a new middle-class audience, who it was felt, would be less compelled to run around throwing bricks at each other".[47] Equally taking stadia to out-of-town sites (Bolton, Derby and Southampton) is increasingly against the wider move away from such developments, given the destructive effects of the 1980s business exodus to out-of-town sites. Indeed, the current recent trend is in the opposite direction, with regional and local governments under pressure to keep large businesses and facilities within towns, to regenerate town and city centres and prevent the hollowing-out of the town.[48]

There are a number of criticisms of terrace culture to consider: Taylor implies that its elimination is a positive development, as it represents unacceptable prejudices and values. One journalist responded to Labour's 1997 plan for safe terracing by claiming that all-seater stadia had excluded and defeated hooliganism, and that bringing back terraces ran the risk of bringing back violence.[49] This is clearly simplistic, conflating those who cannot afford modern prices with violent fans. Moreover, it ignores the violence that persists, in the FAPL and at other clubs with all-seater stadia. It has also been suggested that seats have eliminated sexism and racism, but this is equally simplistic, again ignoring the values expressed by fans in seated areas, before and since the switch to compulsory all-seater.[50] That the first report to the Government's Football Taskforce in 1998 addressed racism

[46] Reported *BBC Radio 5*, 1 January 1998; also noted by Lee 1998, page 43
[47] Tim Crabbe, ex-FSA chair, *The Football Supporter*, Issue 8, page 3.
[48] Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions press release 937, 5 November 1998, 'Government policy on town centres is here to stay': Minister Richard Caborn noted that the rise in out-of-town shopping centres 'has gone far enough'.
[49] Simon Barnes, *Times*, 'Football will not stand for return to terraces', 22 January 1997
[50] Haynes 1995

suggests the problem remains.

The most important feature of the terraces was not that they collectively expressed racist and sexist ideas, but that they expressed anything at all. That fans in unison expressed distinguishable values (interspersed with references to popular culture, music, regional and local identity, and politics) is the important point. Such expression can then be combined with the implicit and explicit conception of participation, of terrace fans forming part of the game and seeking to influence its course, and it is this combination that is culturally significant. As noted previously, prior to the 1960s, chants (and occasionally songs) had been heard at matches, but these were the exception, and for much of the previous decades, it seems clapping was the extent of fans' participation.[51] Clearly, evidence is scant, but it is equally clear that the elements of terrace culture only came together in the 1960s. Thus participation was new in form, intensity and its self-reproducing quality. The specific content of this expression and participation was not necessarily new to the 1960s - Walvin over-emphasises the fact, but there is no merit in whitewashing the terrace values of the 1970s and 1980s;[52] but most, if not all, of these violent, masculinist, racist and sexist values had been expressed at football since its codification. While any book on racism will rightly highlight the abuse terrace fans levelled at black players from the 1950s onwards (like Albert Johannson of Leeds), the world's first black professional, Henry Wharton, who played in the 1880s, also had to face racist abuse and on one occasion had to be admitted into hospital, long before fan 'culture' developed. More recent instances show racism is just as easily expressed from seats: the 1994 riot at Millwall (aimed principally at black opposition players) was in an all-seater ground, while Everton fans doing monkey impressions in games against Norwich in 1994 and Bradford City in 1997 were sitting, as were Sheffield United fans abusing Southend United players in 1996, and Barnsley supporters abusing Arsenal's Ian Wright in 1997. Hooliganism itself of course

[51] Mason notes 'so far as one can tell, spectators gathered fairly quietly before a game, but important cup-ties... brought out a certain amount of pre-match jollification'. (1980, page 158). He also notes that the wearing of colours was common, and singing heard before big matches, but generally these were fairly reactive crowds.
[52] Walvin 1994, pages 192-3

is as old as the game itself.[53]

There is a clear distinction between the simple fact of terrace participation, and the values expressed. Values are changed and changing according to wider cultural forces, and subject to pressures for alteration and retrenchment: both dominant and subordinate values change with generations, as do their modes of expression. As noted above, terrace fans in the late 1980s and early 1990s developed different attitudes and forms of expression from ten years earlier, and the 1990s have seen attempts to modify terrace values of participation to fit more acceptable norms: the Professional Footballers Association itself employed this dichotomy between participation and the specific values expressed for its 'Kick Racism out of Football' campaign. Brendan Batson, deputy chief executive of the PFA (incidentally, he is black) noted that "this campaign is about retaining and building on football's traditional values. We aim to keep the passion, but kick out the prejudice".[54]

The conflation between participation, and the actual ideas expressed, is false and leads to a misreading of the value and nature of terrace culture. The current moves by many clubs to improve atmosphere concedes this very point, since they seek to strip fan culture of values and actions harmful to the club's image, yet have come to recognise that the atmosphere post-Taylor has declined sharply. Thus, participation can be conceptually and practically detached from the attitudes expressed. There are even (though infrequent) examples of fans with an active anti-racist terrace culture. St. Pauli FC fans are renowned for their anti-fascist allegiance and their conscious decision to marry terrace culture with an overt political message and have inspired an international organisation of anti-fascist fans.[55] Other examples include Italian terrace groups who often have political allegiances, some dubious and others more progressive,[56] while Leeds fans picked up on some of these themes when they formed an anti-racist group in 1987, that later generated

[53] Dunning, Williams and Murphy 1988
[54] AGARI Newsletter, No 4, April 1996, Campaign for Racial Equality
[55] The RASH anti-fascist and racist group; *http://www.columbia.edu/~tlm16/*

the fanzine *Marching All Together.* More tangentially, on two extreme occasions, fans from all manner of clubs came together at matches at Brighton in 1997 and Doncaster in 1998 to collectively protest at the running of those clubs, defying the usual definition of fans as mutually antagonistic.

None of this is to excuse or deny racism, sexism or aggression, but simply to note a conceptual distinction between participation, and the values expressed via that participation, and the extent to which those values can be changed from within and without. In this sense, terrace culture *per se* can be defended and seen as a potentially positive cultural expression, and to portray terrace values as unchanging or unchangeable is myopic.

Models of fandom

To examine the nature and degree of contestation we need a clear statement of both traditionality and FAPL conceptions of fandom; such a conceptualisation is essential to any historically, conceptually rooted discussion of ISA sub-culture. It will then be possible to identify the nature and extent of contestation the ISA embodies, enabling us to locate ISA sub-culture *in relation* to these models of fandom. These will inevitably be broad characterisations, but are only intended to paint general pictures of fan cultures and so identify significant defining points at which change in these cultures can be identified. Moreover, the construction of such ideal types enables us to establish whether their growth in the 1990s represents a backlash against FAPL conceptions, or whether they represent no more than an institutional, rather than a conceptual or ideological, shift from the FSA.

Traditional fandom from the 1960s onwards, best categorised as a sub-cultural section of working class culture (the 'lads') was loud, male-based, independent of clubs, aggressive, based around a passionate engagement with the game, all located within a context in which football was seen as the preserve of working class men. This involved a close personal identification with the side (city or region), a strong animosity to specific local or historical

[56] Roversi 1994

rivals, with locality seen as part of their team's identity, and resentment directed against fans from around the country.[57] History and a sense of club tradition formed a significant part of traditionality. Attendance was superior to watching games on television. While games were regularly broadcast, television was never the huge force it is today, even re-scheduling games to suit the requirements of TV, and that on a limited scale only. While the exact make-up of the crowd is unknown, certainly the image of the game and of spectators was of working class men, with self-generated, openly 'offensive' and 'abusive' terrace chants. As late as 1989, the top club in the country was charging only £3.50 to stand. Club kits and other merchandise were available, but not on any significant scale, and support was not equated with buying club goods. The ground was not a place at which to spend idle time: fans would arrive close to kick-off, watch the game, and then return home or repair to pubs. Fans might arrive early to get a good view on the terrace, especially at bigger clubs, but this was to ensure entry and not to treat the ground as a leisure site. As one writer noted, "the terraces provided a refuge from exploitative employers, a passion the working man could call his own".[58] Clearly, this picture does not cover the whole working class element of the crowd, nor does it necessarily apply to all strata within it, and processes of internal resistance to its dominance over the game are often postulated, yet through processes of diffusion and image projection from the late 1960s onwards, this sub-culture was able to stamp its mark on the game generally.

By contrast, 1990s football appeals to very different values, and to a new demography, as is clear from the (essentially flawed) Carling surveys.[59] While the survey administrators might claim that the surveys "have at least the potential to be 'progressive' and... mark out a new era of relations between fans and the game's administrators",[60] in reality this construction serves merely to collapse the fundamental distinction between fans and

[57] There were cases of fighting *between* Manchester-based Manchester United fans and London-based United fans in the early 1970s. Dunning, Williams and Murphy 1988.
[58] *Electronic Telegraph*, 23 January 1997. *http://www.telegraph.co.uk*
[59] See Waddington *et al* 1996 and Nash 1996, 1997 for a critique, and Williams 1996a for a response.
[60] Williams 1996a, page 20

consumers,[61] and the extent to which the game's administrators fundamentally control the agenda governing the relationship with themselves and fans.[62] These critiques however do not eliminate the basis for the Carling surveys, nor do they mean that the surveys lack any value or validity. Instead, the difficulty arises out of the methods used to create the sample (and therefore crucially the sort of fans who responded), and out of invalid attempts to extrapolate from a section of the crowd to the whole. However, since, as King argues, [63] the surveys caught the new spectators *en bloc*, its construction of this section of the crowd (summarised in Table One below), can be accepted as valid, and is anecdotally recognisable from other sources.

Table One: Carling Survey summary of new spectators[64]

[New spectators are] more likely to be affluent, drawn from 'professional' classes
More likely to spend on club merchandise
Less likely to be born in the area in which their club is located
More likely to approve of stadium change
More likely to identify improvements in almost all club services and facilities
More likely to enjoy football's new 'atmosphere'
More likely to approve of FA Premier League
More likely to show approval for football's sponsors
More likely to approve of club marketing
Less strongly club-oriented on club-country debate

New spectators have a lower, less firm, personal identification with, and passion for, their team: they watch for entertainment, and not out of some deep-rooted sense of support. They attend in more mixed groups, or with families, and treat the ground as a leisure site. Merchandising is very significant to this culture, which is much more amenable to change at clubs, notably over symbols (club badges, kits), and structure (stadia, tickets).

[61] Superficially, all attending fans are consumers, in that they buy a match ticket (an argument made in the Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research outline proposal to the Football Taskforce, 1998, for instance), but this is obscurantist pedantry: the distinction between fans and consumers is real, lying in how each comes to support their club, the nature, depth and expressions of that support, the centrality of consumption, and the extent to which match-day is not just about the ninety minutes of the game itself.

[62] Much is made of the FAPL's supporter panels, for instance, but since the agenda for these panels is determined by the FAPL and the clubs, they are ultimately nothing more than market research.

[63] King 1995

[64] Adapted from Carling Survey 1995, page 39, 'Case Study 2: Who are Football's new fans?'

Engagement with the game via TV is considered valid, and support is not equated with attendance, with such spectators less likely actually to follow their team on away matches. They are geographically dispersed and see no essential link between club, locality and identity. They are also likely to have little sense of the club's history, partly because they have little personal identification with it. Obviously these spectators are found throughout the divisions, but are heavily concentrated in the FAPL: it is estimated that 25% of all those fans who never see their team live support Manchester United. The top clubs offer the glamour in attendance (or taking corporate guests), and make the most attractive and enticing marketing pitch to new spectators.

Neither this school of fandom, nor the lads culture outlined above, are conceptualised here as concrete, internally homogenous or unchanging, nor as a dichotomy. They are offered as fluid, broad conceptualisations of visible forms of fandom, that are informed by different cultural forces and trends, underpinned by different ideologies, and leading to different interactions with the game and other spectators, which can therefore have ostensibly similar attitudes towards issues within the game. There is for instance reason to believe that working class culture at football since the 1960s has itself been internally contested and divided, and, as suggested above, that what became known as working class culture at football should, in fact, be seen as a sub-culture of the working class, the lads element, that was allowed to project its image over the game in general while in fact it was not even common to the entire working class (visible in the way that the respectable working class element are held to have deserted the game in the 1970s and 1980s). Conceptualised in this way as a sub-cultural form within the working class, traditionality can be legitimately seen as a central feature of the game from the 1960s to early 1990s, and therefore as central to one of the major fault-lines in the transformation of football (particularly its image and demography).

The question of TV engagement with football is not straightforward: whereas for the new spectator, TV consumption is not the act of a "part-timer" but a valid engagement with the game, it is increasingly attractive to traditional fans who are priced out of or alienated by football's new culture, particularly as

satellite TV offers ever more games each week. Given the option between watching football on TV and not watching any game, traditional fans who would previously see this as a less desirable option choice may well choose to watch the game on TV (particularly in groups). However, this mode of engagement involves a very different cultural dynamic and motivation: the TV audience is thus culturally differentiated in that alongside the genuine TV consumer, it includes the excluded and the alienated. Ultimately, of course, the biggest future source of club revenue (PPV) will depend on reducing the attractiveness of match-day attendance, creating what Armstrong and Giulianotti call "vicarious fandom".[65]

Giulianotti and Armstrong consider this to be a shift from Barthes' *jouissance* to *plaisir*,[66] where rougher, spontaneous cultural forms are replaced by sanitised, controlled forms of 'pleasure', part of which distinction lies in the relationship of each to capital, with the move towards *plaisir* involving the elimination of fandom that threatens profit maximisation. *Jouissance* involves cultural forms that reject and alienate football's new target audience, and the sponsors advertising to them, and take football culture beyond the control of the clubs, as in the FAPL decision to investigate ways of banning 'bad language'.[67] There is also a political element as the shift from *jouissance* eliminates the potential for oppositional strategies to the clubs' project. Giulianotti and Armstrong note the significance of success and the mediation of TV to *plaisir*, factors clearly crucial to modern football paradigms (the emphasis on supporting a winning glamorous side, and the centrality of TV, compared to the 'corporeal' pleasures of actual attendance).

The sanitisation and control of modern fandom, commodification and repression of more spontaneous independent forms of expression, all fit the FAPL move towards more easily controlled and commercially profitable modes of fandom. Part of this is the club control of match-day expression:

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[65] Giulianotti and Armstrong (Eds.) 1997, page 26
[66] ibid.
[67] Quote from Rick Parry, then FAPL chief executive, now chief executive of Liverpool FC, 'Fans feel good in Premiership golden age' in *Electronic Telegraph*, 14 November 1996. *http://www.telegraph.co.uk*

whereas traditional terrace fans greeted the players onto the pitch with songs referring to local or topical events, politics or some embarrassing gossip,[68] many clubs play club tunes at the start and end of games, and/or ice hockey-style tunes when the home team scores. The PA drowns out whatever noise fans might wish to make with standard pop songs, and so the clubs reduce the chance of 'offensive' chants, and sanitise and control match-day.[69] Such an agenda now covers the whole of match-day, with a FAPL working party recommending a range of ways for clubs to generate atmosphere:[70] a trip to Coventry in 1998, for instance, featured stuffed elephant mascots on the pitch, dancing girls, various half-time entertainment, a club tune at the start and end of each half and when the home side scored, and a big screen advertising the game as "entertainment for all the family".

Football is being sanitised, with voluble, aggressive, independent fan culture replaced by consumption and entertainment-based paradigms that construct it as one of a range of leisure options open to the middle-class family customer. As Armstrong and Giulianotti suggest, this process of change "is underwritten by trans-national TV satellite networks and the sudden proliferation of football magazines. As a consequence, the lifelong working class fan faces a future of exclusion as multi-national sponsorship combines with the discovery of a form of lifestyle authenticity for the new British middle-class to hike up match entrance prices".[71] All-seater stadia have led to inevitable price rises: the cheapest adult ticket at Chelsea in 1996-97 cost £20, double the 1992-3 face-value price. Equally Chelsea's most expensive seat in 1997-98 cost £50, and the most expensive season ticket is £887. The crowd has clearly shifted 'upmarket', as fan groups bemoan.[72] Even former England team coach Terry Venables noted that football was no longer for the ordinary person, which he felt would help eliminate violence.[73]

[68] See Kelly 1993 and Watt 1993
[69] Williams 1996b, page 21
[70] FAPL 1997
[71] Armstrong and Giulianotti (Eds.) 1997, Introduction, pages 4 & 5
[72] Both IMUSA and INUSA have criticised their club's policies and motivations in this area. See IMUSA 1996, and Williams 1996b.
[73] *Times*, 2 July 1996

Among the most important shifts in the recasting of the game is the appeal to families, with football actively seeking to make match-day more interesting to families, particularly by redesigning ticket systems and allocations within the ground.[74] The centrality of these familial ideologies was highlighted by Celtic chief executive Fergus McCann in 1997: when faced with a public dispute with a top player, he commented that Celtic "have the biggest family stand in the UK here and I think it is shameful that players should put out false accusations... to deceive these people".[75] There is no logical connection between the first and the second half of the sentence, for there is no reason why the family stand should be singled out, since the dispute centred around the player's comments as made in an open letter to all Celtic fans, but this highlights the centrality of familial discourses.

Redhead suggests, however, that football has entered the 'post-fandom' stage, where old certainties have been superseded by a post-modern culture that he claims was always latent in football, which has now come to the fore. "The 'post-fan' like the 'post-tourist' does not have to leave the house to see the object of the gaze... the self-consciousness of knowing that fandom is 'just a game' and that experience of the game is always mediated, never direct, is a vital part of being a 'post-fan; this notion applies equally both to 'being there' at a match or watching on television".[76] This is a recognisable portrayal of new spectatordom and popular post-modern culture, but this masks how elements of post-fandom are appropriated by, and merged with, traditionality. Traditionality and post-fandom are not mutually exclusive, as Redhead himself points out in earlier work;[77] the carnivalesque and self-ironic combined with elements of traditionality in the late 1980s and early 1990s to form a new post-Hillsborough terrace culture. Traditionality and Redhead's post-fandom are not opposites or essentially contradictory, and indeed for a while the latter infused traditionality with 'modern' forms of expression. Post-fandom sits between traditionality and new spectatorism,

[74] King 1997b, page 234
[75] *Electronic Telegraph*, 'McStay's career ended by injury', 17 May 1997, *http://www.telegraph.co.uk*
[76] Redhead 1996, page 6
[77] Redhead 1991

diverse elements of it are synchronous with the former and others with the latter, yet they have naught in common. Post-fandom informs both models and yet offers no common ground between them. It is therefore not necessarily a separate form of fandom, as Redhead suggests, but more an issue of style and image that can influence existing models of fandom. Moreover Redhead ignores how "being there" is direct for traditional fans, such that they actively participate in the actual ebb and flow of the game as it pans out. This is the fundamental shift that has occurred since the advent of all-seater stadia, in that the character of the match-day has changed, as has the nature of the choice between watching on television and attending the match.[78] In a context where traditionality is unwelcome and actively suppressed, television consumption will become more appealing as the way the lads can watch the game together and recreate the sociability of the terrace. This reinforces the need to examine the diversity of the TV audience.[79] The issue of prices is vital, since fans without the means to attend regularly have only the choice of watching on television or not witnessing the game at all. Whereas traditional fans saw TV consumption of football as a lesser option to be considered only when actual attendance was impractical, for many it may become the only regular viable option. Sky's blanket coverage and continual rescheduling of fixtures may actually become the saviour of traditional fans who can no longer attend regularly – the same commercialism that culturally and financially excludes traditional fans simultaneously offers them a way of watching games.

The FAPL is thus an attempt to re-define fandom, a struggle that no longer involves confrontation, as in the 1980s; by re-defining fandom, the FAPL simply bypass many forces of resistance, replacing fans with 'customers' and using ticket prices and systems to exclude the undesirable. A battle of cultural attitudes has developed between the commercialised and commodified FAPL view and traditional fans, and contestation provides a framework for analysis of the motivation of fans looking towards sites of organised fandom in this struggle.

[78] This obviously applies even more to fans of clubs who regularly appeared on TV pre-1992.
[79] Taylor I 1995

Two problems attend the use of such schools of fandom, and contestation as the core explanatory tool. First, by necessity, such an analysis will be repetitive in many senses, in that all the positions uncovered on various issues within the game will have to be relationally located to the schools of fandom here. Second, and more concretely, it could be countered that the cultures of these ISAs are necessarily abstract and therefore often have no purposive role within the modern game. On the other hand, these groups and their cultures are firstly significant in that they have all successfully penetrated the decision-making processes at their club (in both formal and informal ways), and secondly, all deal in publicity and attempt to shape public agenda. For instance the issue of terraces re-surfaced in 1998 essentially as a result of campaigning by some of these groups (and IMUSA primarily). To this extent, and as the democratic voice of fans, the culture an ISA personifies is significant, illuminates their role in modern football, indicates the issues that motivate them and their members and what they would bring to the ideological battle if the need (and the occasion) arose.

The changing paradigms of football

That football has shifted its ideology and target constituency is indisputable: the family-centred discourses, entertainment and spectating (reliant on marketing, hype and the creation of stars, and what the FA called "integrated leisure experiences")[80] have fundamentally changed the people football wants to attract, and who can regularly attend. As respected national fanzine *When Saturday Comes* commented on the tenth anniversary of Heysel, "in 1985, it would have been difficult to imagine a time when there would be a feature in a broadsheet newspaper... arguing in pained tones, 'that only about half the men in Britain' like football... ten years on from Heysel, no-one needs to explain why they're a football fan'"[81] That football's target spectators have shifted can also be seen in the goods clubs sell, like Celtic's credit cards and Personal Equity Plans, ticket schemes open to more affluent fans, and the ubiquitous corporate hospitality: Manchester United was the first club

[80] Football Association, 1991, page 11
[81] *When Saturday Comes* editorial, May 1995, Issue 100

to actively court corporate interest, in 1965, (£250 to £300 a season would secure an executive box at Old Trafford),[82] but in 1965 this was unique, it is now central to the modern football industry.

Central to bourgeoisification and the FAPL, yet separate from it, is the enforced conversion of terraces, as discussed previously. One opponent to Labour's terracing proposal in 1997 remarked that it "cuts right across everything that football is now. It is no longer a working-class ritual. It is a fashionable and bloated plutocracy".[83] While there is no suggestion that Taylor was a proponent of what became the FAPL, his Final Report contains the very same concepts of "wholesome" entertainment and spectating. Equally importantly, football's economic paradigm has changed; as King argues,[84] Thatcherite competition has replaced the League's collectivist cross-subsidisation - John Hall once claimed this meant that Newcastle were bankrolling their 'competitors' like Hartlepool. Free market paradigms dominate, and football is routinely constructed as a business to be run on sound business lines with classic business objectives in mind.

The range of sponsors has broadened, with personal computer firms now heavily represented, and financial service and mobile phone companies regularly taking out pitch-side adverts. Top clubs earn as much from merchandising as gate receipts (merchandising earned United £18.7m in 1996-97, compared to £18.8m from gate receipts).[85] Clearly some of these practices pre-date FAPL: United first sold sponsorship ('hospitality') in 1985,[86] but now they are viewed as essential. The impact on finances of the game is obvious: the £22.2m Sky awarded in bonuses to FAPL clubs in 1996-7 was double the last multi-year deal the old First Division signed with terrestrial TV.[87] The transfer market has been internationalised; wages have spiralled; the dislocation between FAPL clubs and lower divisions

[82] Crick and Smith 1989, page 169
[83] Simon Barnes, *Times*, 'Football will not stand for return to terraces', 22 January 1997
[84] King 1995
[85] Deloitte and Touché 1997, page 44
[86] Crick and Smith 1989, page 214
[87] *Electronic Telegraph*, 16 August 1996. *http://www.telegraph.co.uk*

increased;[88] and the City of London has become important. A number of clubs have been floated on the Stock Market,[89] and specialist investment funds created to deal solely in club shares (Singer and Friedlander's Football Fund, launched in January 1997, attracted 850,000 enquiries in its first three days),[90] along with specialist football newsletters offering 'intelligence on [sports] companies, teams and markets'.[91] Institutional investors have become increasingly attracted to clubs: video distributors VCI tried to buy Manchester United in 1996 for £300m but the board wanted £400m[92] (more than the entire 1992 Sky deal) for a club nearly sold for £15m in 1989. Leisure group Conrad negotiated with six clubs before buying Sheffield United in 1996, while investment company ENIC own stakes in AEK Athens, Legia Warsaw, Vicenza, Rangers and Rapid Vienna. When floated in 1997 Newcastle United was valued at £200m – a club that was virtually bankrupt in 1991. The case of Tottenham is significant, since when it floated in 1983, opinion was uniformly negative, an attitude underlined by Tottenham's problems in the late 1980s. The diversified operations that Tottenham engaged in (and lost control of) are now however exactly the processes modern clubs rely upon.

In a recent article, Cheffins[93] argues that floatation is a positive step that in no way represents a threat to the interests of fans. Adopting a free market logic where the supporter is king, he claims that "it would seem to follow that a publicly quoted football club cannot ignore the concerns of its supporters".[94] Such a conceptualisation ignores how a legal obligation to maximise profit will create pressure to move the supporter base further up the social scale, to diversify and create new revenue streams, with obvious impacts on

[88] As clear from 1995-96 sponsorship deals: Everton signed a four year deal worth £4m with Danka, while Aston Villa signed a six year deal with AST for £3m. Lower division Luton Town agreed a four year contract with Pony worth £250,000 and Brentford's three year arrangement with Ericcson netted £200,000.
[89] In 1996 and 1997, Southampton, Leicester, Aston Villa, Nottingham Forest, Birmingham City, Newcastle United, Chelsea, Sheffield United, Sunderland and West Bromwich Albion all floated, or announced their intention to do so.
[90] *Electronic Telegraph*, 30 January 1997, 'Football Fund attracting big crowds'. *http://www.telegraph.co.uk*
[91] *Sports Investor*, published by Perspective Press, 106 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3DB
[92] *Guardian*, 25 September 1996
[93] Cheffins 1997

supporters. While Cheffins notes that crowd change is a possibility, he glibly concludes that "despite such possible concerns, it is far from clear that the floatation of a football club will have a serious impact on a team's supporters'.[95] Equally, since his argument does not adequately consider the possibility of take-overs of quoted clubs, he cannot conceive of further marginalisation of the interests of supporters by the fact of floatation. The issue of ownership is significant, notably for the biggest clubs who represent huge investment opportunities for global capital, yet Cheffins' account does not address this in any substantive fashion. As another benefit of floatation, his suggestion that post-floatation, fan shareholders can "ask questions about team affairs which are awkward for the board of directors",[96] conceals the massive power differential in shareholding in quoted clubs: at clubs that have floated this has not proved a significant factor in the fan-club relationship. Other benefits of floatation that Cheffins outlines rely on specific heavily value-laden ideologies concerning fandom that cannot be taken as given or incontestable, as do his suggestions on stadium redevelopment.[97]

Despite Cheffins' incomplete and confused assertions to the contrary, there are signs that floatation is adversely affecting managers and clubs. Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson was refused the six-year contract he requested in 1996 because City shareholders oppose long deals, and it is strongly rumoured the that the plc status of the club unfavourably interfered with their £15m bid for Alan Shearer. The timing of Newcastle United manager Kevin Keegan's resignation in 1997 was also affected by the floatation process: Keegan wanted to leave at the end of the 1996-97 season, but since the club would have been legally obliged to communicate this to the City and so affect the floatation, Keegan was told to sign a two-year contract or resign. He resigned, and later revealed he was forced to sell players, claiming "I had to raise £6 million to get the bank off the club's back before the float".[98] A few months later, Southampton manager Graeme

[94] ibid., page 109
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Cheffins 1997, pages 109-110
[98] *Electronic Telegraph*, 'Keegan: I quit Newcastle because I wouldn't sign two-year deal'. 28

Souness resigned after complaining about the club's new chairman, appointed after Southampton conducted a reverse floatation of a property company. "the people... making the decisions are non-footballing people and both Lawrie [McMenemy, Southampton's director of football who also resigned] and myself found it difficult to take on board their attitude" [99] Maybe the most blatant case was Nottingham Forest, where the Board ordered the team manager against his wishes to accept back a star striker who had gone on strike [100] Floatation (imminent or actual) mediates the most basic footballing decisions, causing the Chief Executive of the League Managers Association to suggest it will affect promotion for promising young managers, and that City investors approach football with the wrong mentality based on a desire for "short term gains not conducive to the long term good of football".[101]

The City clearly views football as any other business: for instance, an invitation to a 1997 'Finance and Football' conference offered the chance (at a price of some £1100 for attendance) to "score in the investment and business opportunities of football", and get "an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of how to profit from football". [102] The necessary specificity of football and the fact of its fans are sidelined, but the risk arising from the uncertainty of the result is highlighted with comments on how a European SuperLeague could lower this investment risk Details of another conference had the following telling quote "the strategy on all sides is to make as much money as you can for as long as it lasts",[103] and the attitude of investors was made clear by the editor of *Sports Investor* who predicted that stock market interest in football will grow, but "only the top teams will thrive on stock markets medium-sized clubs could be squeezed mercilessly There's going to be some victims" [104]

April 1997 *http //www telegraph co uk*
[99] *Guardian*, 27 May 1997
[100] *Times*, 27 October 1998
[101] *Guardian*, 23 January 1997
[102] Conference agenda organised by IBC UK Conferences, April 1997
[103] SMI *Maximising the profitability of football clubs* conference, October 1997, London
[104] Nando Internet archive, 'English soccer goes on the stock market', 4 May 1997

Even at clubs that have not floated but where business has penetrated the structure, the clash of interests is clearly visible, as in the case of Marseilles, whose chairman, Robert Louis-Dreyfus, also runs Adidas. Discussing Marseilles' 1997-98 transfer strategy, it was reported the club "would have liked to sign up... Baggio or Zola but... Baggio was under contract with a rival sportswear company and... [Louis-Dreyfus] wanted only players linked with Adidas".[105] The most basic operation of any club, building the playing staff, was thus mediated by commercial considerations. Equally, sponsors create deals and so cannot be seen as an add-on to football, with the relatively average Japanese striker, Kazuyoshi Miura, spending a year with Italian top division side Genoa in 1993-94, arranged by Genoa's sponsors, Japanese firm Kenwood (who also paid Miura's wages).

The blanket TV coverage from Sky together with the overwhelming interest from newspapers have played a central role in the recasting of football, as detailed here. The view that television needed football more than football needed television is belied by the amount of Sky pays, which, with the additional spin-off millions it generates, are used to pay inflated wages and big transfer fees.[106] Sky accept the overriding importance of the FAPL to their future, but the uses the Sky money has been put to makes television football's biggest 'shareholder', and, and more importantly, irrevocably hitches the fortunes of football to television. Taylor's call for a serious analysis of the diverse fandoms created by TV consumption of football is significant,[107] particularly in the sense of highlighting the diverse motivations and cultural dynamics involved in modern TV consumption of the game. However the view that "we may miss the significance... of new ways of being a fan and... proclaiming, in an increasingly globalised world, one's local origin and identity"[108] ignores, if not hides, the fact that many new spectators have no strong identity with their clubs. TV consumption may be the basis of a new

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http://www.nando.net/newsroom/ap/oth/1997/oth/soc/feat/archive/050497/soc30943.html

[105] Nando Internet archive, 'Marseilles aiming to sign stars for next season', 19 May 1997. *http://www.nando.net/newsroom/sports/oth/1997/oth/soc/feat/archive/051997/soc4088.html*

[106] Aston Villa's wages rose 48% from £7m in 1996 to £10.4m in 1998 (*Times*, 'Villa float will make Ellis £4m', 18 April 1997). See also Deloitte and Touché 1997 and 1998.

[107] Ian Taylor 1995, pages 28 & 29

[108] ibid.

engagement with football, but it is unclear how this can be deemed an expression of local origin or identity. Taylor's conception also underplays the impact on local supporters who suffer by comparison with dispersed fans, and the consequent difficulties in getting tickets (Newcastle, Liverpool and Manchester, for instance), particularly as clubs positively discriminate in favour of non-local fans.[109] While such diaspora of support around clubs must be noted, their full consequences also have to be addressed.

Many of these changes represent a different ideology and view of football, and thus represent a fundamental break with preceding decades. In many ways, football and football culture are unrecognisable from five years ago, fashionable in a way that must bemuse many fans actively involved in the 1980s, when it was a political, economic and social pariah.

Disenfranchisement

Any reference to the disenfranchisement of traditional fans clearly implies the premise that the fans were previously 'enfranchised' in some way. If by the latter is meant fans helping make decisions, influence or own or control clubs, then we are looking at a rather rare occurrence. Very few clubs have included fans in their structures and even fewer have genuinely consulted with supporters. Some have on occasion invited fanzine editors to Board meetings (such as in Manchester City), but such a participation issued from the goodwill of the chairman, and may not be taken as a sign of democratisation or participation in control. This applies equally to relations between the Football League or FA, and fans: the NFFSC was formed in 1927 but did not *officially* meet the League or FA until the late 1970s. This changed with the arrival of the FSA in 1985, who forced themselves into the "corridors of power", but this has not been translated into any long-term institutional reform, ascribing a role to them in football..

Some see the failed relationship between football and its fans as a possible explanation for hooliganism: both Ian Taylor and Rogan Taylor[110] locate

[109] Common at both Liverpool and Manchester United for instance.
[110] Taylor I 1971, Taylor R 1992

violence within this context, which undermines the relevance of disenfranchisement. But despite their clear and total institutional detachment from it, traditional fans could still argue, with some plausibility, that they had a central role in determining the future of football for it could simply not survive without them. Predictions of the decline of football, signalled by the departure of the new spectators in favour of the next fad, are necessarily premised on the un-stated view that only traditional 'real' fans, the core of football until recently, can be its saviours but only if they are not totally alienated.

If disenfranchisement is taken not to mean a loss of control (it never existed), but is predicated on the current economics of the game, then the fact that until the 1990s football was dependent on gate receipts, and that fans were football's biggest financial contributors, will allow them to consider themselves (previously) enfranchised. Football drew its authenticity from the roots put down in the local working class community, emotionally belonged to the local area and people, as loyalty to specific clubs developed, reinforcing this sense of enfranchisement. Many (though not all) players remained 'visible' in the local area, during and after their careers. Certainly even by the mid-1980s, gate receipts were the main source of income, such that even if taken for granted, herded into unsafe ill-managed stadia and treated with contempt *inter alia* by the police, politicians, the media and the football authorities, the traditional fans on the Kop, North Bank, Gallowgate End and Holte End were the rock upon which football was built. Only in the 1990s did income from sponsors, TV, kit manufacturers and corporate hospitality assume the greater significance leading to the view that the respect accorded to poorer, traditional fans had declined.

Essentially, the clubs have recast football in the 1990s such that they can choose who they want inside stadia, and have the means to dispense with traditional fans. It is in this sense one may speak of disenfranchisement. That this cannot be confirmed or denied is less important than the importance of its currency among traditional fans. Indeed the argument can be pushed one stage further, to suggest that the strong passion and commitment generated by traditional fans must be destroyed, or at the very least channelled and

limited, else they will become a threat to the FAPL. It would clearly be hard to attract the family and corporate spectators (and the huge sums spent on merchandise and refreshments, and the money blue-chip companies advertising to these spectators) if at one end of the ground, traditional fans are singing 'offensive' chants and displaying potentially aggressive attitudes to match officials, opposition players and fans.

There are of course problems with any form of class-based analysis, not least of which is any unchanging sense of class and class cultures. Clearly these shift over time, and it is wrong to fix them, particularly when empirical evidence is weak. The class-based demography of the football crowd until the 1990s amounts to little more than educated and informed guesswork derived from partial secondary sources (photographs, prices, employment levels) or suspect primary sources (the biased accounts of contemporary middle-class commentators). This is not to say that the history of the crowd is wrong (as constructed by Mason or Fishwick),[111] but simply that it is hard to say with any certainty what the crowd composition was in any decade. This means concepts like bourgeoisification and disenfranchisement start from suspect premises, although most accept changes explicable in class terms have occurred. The anecdotal evidence suggesting that the fanbase has changed (atmosphere inside stadia, the match-day 'feel', prices, popularity of corporate facilities, the new 'professional' football magazines and 'new' writing) when combined with the statements of intent for the future seems enough to confirm a shift. If it is undeniable that the constituency of football has changed, investigating ISAs in class terms becomes valid.

The History of Fan Organisations

Part of the objective here is to locate the ISA movement within the wider context and history of fan groups, and identify the extent to which it is new or only a reactive response to the 1990s, and how it relates to the FSA.

Most football supporters' clubs were social or Supporters' Clubs (SCs) that

[111] Mason 1980, Fishwick 1989

existed to raise funds for the football club. Many SCs came together in the NFFSC, followed by the FSA, then followed a few years later by a different sort of club-based SC, namely the ISA, exhibiting an aggressive campaigning style. Each has different objectives and ethos: the NFFSC was always devoted to helping the clubs and the game, which Taylor attributes to its class make-up:[112] run by and for lower middle-class conservatives, the notion of representing fans fell outside its sense of duty and service, ensuring its decline from the 1960s onwards, when important issues like debt, violence, crumbling stadia and declining public interest in football arose for which it could offer no distinctive or effective solutions. Unable to adapt to the forces re-shaping football, the NFFSC could not attract the support of embittered and angry fans.

The arrival on the scene of the FSA highlighted these problems FSA, with its individual membership, regional branches, and a remit to campaign to empower fans, brought an aggressive approach to the situation which allowed it quickly to attract the support of thousands of fans eager to realign football (or in the Left's Utopian terms, 'reclaim' it) and to fight for their rights within it (including representation). Within a specific historical context, it drew much of its strength from the contingent circumstances of the 1980s (notably the appalling organisation of the European Cup Final at Heysel, and Thatcher's assaults on football); without these factors it is unlikely the FSA would have been created or attracted members. A sense of politicised outrage was clearly a *sine qua non* behind the FSA.[113] But since its heyday post-Hillsborough, it too has declined, despite important policy successes and much useful work. Membership and finance keep on falling, which organisers openly concede makes it hard for them to put pressure on the clubs, and the organisation had barely more members in 1996-7 than some individual ISAs. This obviously does not mean it ceases to be a representative organisation, but it clearly lacks the legitimacy it enjoyed in the 1980s because of its visibly larger membership. Just as the arrival and rise of the FSA highlighted the failures of the NFFSC, so the arrival and rise of the

[112] Taylor 1992
[113] Nash 1998

ISAs has put the weaknesses of the FSA into sharp relief.

The first ISAs were formed at Chelsea in 1986 and QPR in 1987, and clearly tapped into the same spirit as the FSA, despite the antagonism between them. Ruben's interviews with ISA leaders in the early 1990s indicate they shared the same frustrations and problems as the FSA and fanzines.[114] They also fit neatly into the mid- to late-1980s project of reclaiming the image of fans from journalists and politicians. This meant that many of the early ISAs recognised a role beyond whatever specific issue sparked their creation, particularly fan representation, and provided the administrative and ideological model for subsequent waves. Barber[115] suggests that ISAs were created by activists seeking to re-define the relationship between clubs and fans, and that they potentially offer the FSA a lifeline for the future, while Brown argues that for ISAs, "what has been and is at stake is the ability of 'young white males' (and others) to go to a stadium to watch live football... I would argue that they represent a fundamental re-generation of football fandom – politicised, sometimes carnivalesque, highly organised, uniquely popular".[116]

The real impetus for the formation of ISAs came in the 1990s, with 33 ISAs 'affiliated' to the fast-developing Network by May 1997,[117] plus three or four others outside it and a couple that have been and gone already. In terms of media coverage and access, ISAs have clearly overtaken the FSA, giving local media a club-based representative organisation to approach for quotable reaction to events: when Sky bid for Manchester United in 1998 many media outlets sought the opinions of IMUSA. ISAs have been very adept at using these relationships to publicise their campaigns and put pressure on clubs. This was especially true of the campaign by Newcastle and Sunderland fans to overturn a police ban on away supporters at derby games (see *infra* Chapter Six) by using their media contacts to publicise the

[114] Ruben 1993
[115] Barber 1998, pages 138-9
[116] Brown 1998, page 65
[117] The Network has no actual affiliates, it operates as a co-ordinating group and an information network.

situation. The FSA are favoured national media insiders on national issues, events abroad, and any political involvement with football; ISAs also have strong links with their local media, and the tide of membership is towards the ISAs and away from the FSA.

Implicitly, support for and involvement in an ISA represents a rejection of the organisational structure of the FSA, its ethos and *modus operandi*, ISAs have 'replaced' the FSA as the focus of fan activism, and this change can in theory be linked to class: though the FSA's public image is not entirely accurate, it is clear that many traditional fans see it as left-wing and middle-class, and too much concerned with 'talking' - as King suggests,[118] the 'lads' will not see the FSA as part of their interaction with football, or representative of their views. *England, My England* (a book written by two fans) describes the FSA as "a fine body of men, ready and willing to appear on television at a moment's notice to talk bollocks for a couple of minutes - the perfect advert for the trendy fan or the football anorak",[119] and accuses it of stealing the glory that should rightly belong to others (i.e. over the defeat of ID cards). The validity of these criticisms is less important than the common class sub-text they carry.

The absence of a perceived single (external) major threat to football as such (for instance, as from the Thatcher governments) is probably of greater significance in the explanation of the relative fortunes of the FSA in relation to the ISAs. The dominant feature of the 1990s is the fractured nature of the forces threatening and re-shaping the game, now controlled and directed by individual clubs. This process of fracturing puts the non-club based FSA at an conceptual and ideological disadvantage. More generally, though, fans find it closer to their 'instincts' to align themselves with fans of their own club: consequently the ISAs should find it easier to attract and retain members by generating a sense of common identity and fandom more appealing than the FSA's collectivist mentality and regionalised organisation.

[118] King 1997a
[119] Brimson D and Brimson E 1996, page 260

It is also worth noting that for fans to participate in the FSA or ISAs is itself a significant development, since most, notably traditional working class, supporters, would describe themselves as un-political and non-activists. For fans to join and participate in such groups is significant, which in part explains the evident decline of the FSA: the anger and outrage needed to maintain active membership and encourage activism is obviously easier to generate on a club basis. Traditional concepts of fandom are tribal, and it is generally easier to motivate fans around their own immediate, rather than national 'abstract', issues. This is not to say that any national movement is doomed to failure - the first four years of the FSA demonstrate otherwise - but that it is likely to lack long-term strength, and be subject to damaging fluctuation in membership and activism. It is more than probable that FSA membership fluctuated according to the strength and perceived injustice of the Thatcher governments' assaults on football. National movements can be very powerful in times of general crisis, but since such crises will eventually be resolved or lose their immediacy, such a movement is susceptible to decline. This inevitably makes it easier to focus fans' interest and attention around an ISA, since the impact of such crises on fans are tangible, if not also instantaneous. The difference between abstract or 'political' long-term forces (the widening gap between big and small clubs) and immediate club-based issues (prices, seating and tickets etc) undoubtedly explains much of the extra interest behind ISAs.

The development of ISAs and their specific features is highly instructive about the respective failings of the NFFSC and FSA, the nature of fan commitment, and what leads supporters to make the voluntary effort inherent in active membership. Table Two below charts, in abstract, the differences between these fan groups, offering a short-hand, generalised indication of these groups' central features, particularly how each operates, what it would seek to do within the game and how it relates to other fans, and other elements within professional football.

Table Two: Characteristics of English football fan organisations

	NFFSC	FSA	ISA
STRUCTURE	National, based around Supporter Club affiliation.	Individual membership, organised regionally.	Club based, individual membership.
AIMS	Raise money for clubs, and support game.	Empower and represent ordinary fans, at game's highest levels.	Represent fans at individual clubs?
NATURE/ APPEAL	Reactive. 'Good of the game'	Campaign-driven, pro-active. 'Good of all fans'	Campaign-driven, pro-active. Good of fans at one club
POLITICAL STANCE	Right/centre-right.	Centre/centre-left.	Centre-left.
KEY PLAYER/ BATTLE	Clubs key. No *de facto* battle, faith placed in authorities.	Fans key. Fans 'against' clubs/league authorities.	Fans key. Fans 'against' individual clubs.
MEDIA PROFILE	Non-existent.	Very strong on national issues, good on club issues.	Very strong on local and club-based issues
DECISION MAKING	Resolutions submitted to conference	National line, regional branches make own decisions. Conference driven.	Decided by committee, direct 'democracy', driven by grass-roots membership.

Clearly ISAs, rather than the FSA, are now the proper subject of analysis; they have taken over from the FSA as the dominant form of organised fandom and are the dominant form of fan organisation in the 1990s. They are also capable of penetrating, in fundamental ways, the power relations of the modern game: aside from the research findings presented here, and IMUSA, maybe a classic example is the Goodison for Ever-ton (GfE) campaign group, which successfully challenged the assertion of Everton chairman Peter Johnson that it was impossible to redevelop Goodison Park at an affordable cost; the professional development plans which the GfE commissioned[120] were fundamental in helping win the argument for staying at Goodison, and seriously damaging Johnson's overall authority as chairman in the process. Once a picture emerges of the significance of ISAs in 1990s football, it will become possible to develop an understanding of fan groups,

[120] Located at *http://evertonfc.merseyworld.com/gfe/*

how fans relate to the groups that represent them, and possibly also why the FSA has so declined since the late 1980s.

The New Political Economy of Football

Essentially, the analysis in this chapter relates in different ways to the new political economy of football in the 1990s, as discussed by Lee.[121] His argument, concerning the game's new formations, is a convincing one and offers some important pointers to its current state, guiding principles and ideologies, particularly its realignment towards Thatcherite capitalism. The arguments presented here regarding the new capitalist ethos of football, the centrality of the choice to consume, the profit maximisation agenda that drives the top end of the game and the detachment of the top twenty clubs (structurally, financially and ideologically) from the rest of the professional game all contribute to, and draw on, this new political economy, with football aligning itself with the interests (and needs) of capital in a new economic, cultural and political formation. This is both the result of, and the agenda behind, the various elements of transformation outlined above, creating an entirely new context that fans (particularly those who did attend football before 1992) have to reconcile themselves to, operate within every time they attend a top division match, and confront in so many media discussions of the modern game.

It is this context that ISAs have to face, and the context that their clubs are operating within when ISAs seek to influence or change their policies or strategies. Specifically, the general thrust of the modern political economy leads to the continual build-up of unresolved pressures within modern football, accepted by clubs to different degrees and that they operate in different ways. Centrally, these include far greater pressure for profit maximisation, primarily through the development and expansion of commercial processes and operations. As suggested above, such operations are, not add-ons to the new political economy of football, but central to football's new agenda, and so impact directly on fans. Maybe the best

[121] Lee 1998

example of such pressures is the drive to maintain more revenue within a limited number of clubs, clearly the motivation not just behind the development of the Big Five in the late 1980s,[122] but also the creation of the FAPL, and radical changes to the European Cup in the early and late 1990s: this motivation continues to drive the development of individual club agenda. Contestation to the new political economy, or more accurately the scope, nature and focus of contestation to the new political economy, is therefore the conceptual context within which these ISAs are analysed and discussed.

[122] Liverpool, Arsenal, Manchester United, Tottenham and Everton were dubbed the Big Five as they dominated television deals in the late 1980s, appeared most regularly on TV and received the vast majority of the money. Conn 1997, pages 16-17

Chapter Two - Methodology

The methodology in this thesis is essentially divided into four elements; by the nature of the investigation and the hypothesis, no single method would have covered all these components. These were observation of a meeting of each ISA, surveying opinions of ISA members via a questionnaire, analysis of ISA documents, and an interview with a senior member of the ISA committee or ISA leader. All the research was carried out overtly: a contact was established at each ISA, either a committee member or the leader of the group, and permission was sought to attend a meeting of the group. My presence, role and purpose were explained at the start of the meeting, usually by the contact. Fans knew what I sought to do and had the informed option of talking to me or filling in a questionnaire, or refusing co-operation.

The Sample of ISAs

The four ISAs analysed (at Sheffield United, Southampton, Newcastle United and Leicester City) were selected because each represents either a different 'category' of club in the League structure, or because of the salience of a specific issue for the club (stadium reconstruction, for instance). Newcastle represent the new money in football in the 1990s, floatation, personal fortunes made by directors, demographic change within the crowd, ticket restrictions, and attempts to build a new ground. Sheffield United represents clubs recently relegated from the promised land of the Premier League, while Leicester have achieved beyond their means in the top division, lacking the resources needed to really challenge at the top level, while Southampton have a proud and unbroken record in the top division that should have been impossible with their resources, and have been mainly concerned in recent years with relegation. These ISAs thus provide a wide cross-section of levels of finance, ambition, plans for expansion and cultural contexts.

Moreover, the choice of these four ISAs was deemed sufficient because it covered differences in geographic location and football status. Given the complexity of modern football, to have covered more ISAs would have meant

a diminution in the level of analytical attention paid to each. An expanded sample could have been handled, but at the expense of rigorous analysis of all the relevant issues. Equally, since this process required personal contacts, the scope for approaching more ISAs was limited: an approach was made, for instance, to the ISA at Manchester City, which did not generate access. It should also be noted that Wimbledon's ISA (WISA) was also approached and were happy to co-operate, but the WISA case-study was deleted, because of the limited scope of their operations in the immediate term (understandably, WISA were pre-occupied with the club's proposed move to Dublin or Humberside, so they tended to address rather few other issues at the material time of this research).

The research sample at each ISA was restricted to one meeting and one attempt to survey the opinions of members, for a number of reasons. Some ISAs had problems in arranging their meetings (they do not all have regular and pre-arranged meetings); there seemed to be a strong constancy of process and approach in each of their meetings; and the minutes of their meetings revealed the fact that essentially the same members tended to attend each time. Equally, given that access depended on personal contacts, there was a danger of abusing the co-operation of the ISA leadership in seeking to attend more meetings.

The interview stage was restricted to the ISA contact or leader on the grounds that it was intended to provide the view from 'the top', from people who knew the history and ebb and flow of the ISA, and who regularly interacted with a range of members: only a few people can offer such a perspective. There is of course the danger of allowing the participants to write the history of their group,[123] but since these interviewees drew attention to issues that were not to the advantage of the ISA, did not present it in sanitised ways, and did not necessarily even want to portray themselves in the way the research may have appeared to want them to (that is, as groups designed for, and filled by, excluded or disaffected working class fans), this

[123] Taylor and Bogdan 1984, page 99

was not such an issue. There is sometimes a preponderance on the contact and the interview for information (particularly on historical points), but the essential veracity of the perspective presented by the contact could be confirmed by other data collected within the research process, notably the ISA documents. Since the focus throughout was on perspectives and attitudes, these elements were deemed more important than veracity as such: as Taylor and Bogdan note, 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'.[124]

Such a sample clearly does not include a 'successful' club: Manchester United would have been a good case study, but some of the individuals running their ISA at the time of the research (since departed) had a long history of antagonism towards anything emanating from Liverpool (including the Football Supporters Association), plus the fact that other researchers have already considered IMUSA in terms similar to this.[125] The sort of entrée that Giulianotti[126] describes (with reference to football hooligan groups) would have been difficult at IMUSA when the research was being constructed, and might have required concealment of my institutional background from ordinary members: to this extent, researching IMUSA seemed un-necessary.

Furthermore, although Newcastle have been unable to achieve genuine success on the pitch, they apply the same principles and processes used by other, successful, clubs, like Manchester United. These include commodification, increases in ticket prices, merchandising, runaway wages and transfers, stock market floatation, and crowd de-localisation (including, latterly, attempts to target different parts of the country, to re-position the club so as to move Newcastle's active and non-active support base from the 'Scotch Corridor' towards the South East and abroad). Newcastle are also interesting for their 1996 plan to relocate to Castle Leazes: although they were forced a year later to commence the redevelopment of St James' Park instead, for the best part of a year, United were trying to build a new ground,

[124] ibid.
[125] Lee 1998, Brown 1998, King 1997a
[126] Giulianotti 1995

and hence the inclusion of INUSA offers scope to unpack what its membership wanted to see in that new facility. United may not have actually won anything for over twenty years, but nonetheless they have come such a long way since the early 1990s that their recent history can almost be taken as a form of success: a combination of factors at the club have meant that it has been able to operate off the pitch as if it was successful.

The issue of stadia is one of the most significant of the 1990s, and highlights a number of significant issues that contribute to models of fandom (as discussed in Chapter One) and here relates in different ways to all four clubs examined. Both Southampton and Sheffield United have had problems with their grounds, with the Taylor Report creating even greater pressures on capacity: Sheffield United had only three sides of Bramall Lane open for a couple of years, while Southampton spent three years seeking planning permission for a new ground, firstly outside the city, at Stoneham, and then at an inner-city site at St Mary's. Newcastle were equally affected by the Taylor Report, with capacity reduced to 32,000 by 1996, and actively exploring various ways of expanding this, while Leicester were restricted to just over 21,000 post-Taylor and sought from 1997 onwards to relocate. The specific issue of the features of the new stadium (regardless of legal or financial constraints) can shed considerable light on the sort of fans and fan culture the ISA represents, which also contributes a further justification of the restricted choice of the sample.

Generally, all these clubs (bar Newcastle) either have, or have had, financial problems, be it in the form of genuine debts or lack of revenue leading to tight controls on transfers and a need to sell players before buying. Thus, the lack of success these clubs represent also allows the research to highlight how far supporters would be prepared to go in order to achieve success and how far they will compromise their principles in that quest. Each of these clubs usually has to balance its purchases each season by selling players, though equally each represents a different financial history: Sheffield United were taken over by businessman and Manchester City fan Mike McDonald and then floated on the stock market, and Leicester became the first club to be

taken over by the dedicated football investment fund Soccer Investments, and were floated soon afterwards. Southampton meanwhile were floated late in 1996 via a reverse take-over of a property company with no connection with football, leading to immediate suggestions that team manager Graeme Souness and Director of Football, Lawrie McMenemy, resigned from the club in 1997 because of the activities and the attitude of new chairman, Rupert Lowe. There were also numerous claims about the share dealings of the ex-club chairman, Guy Askham, and his board of directors in the run-up to the floatation, which prompted a police investigation. Even Newcastle have recently been unable to spend in the transfer market as they would wish following their 1997 floatation, and despite their size and glamour, have at times found themselves short of liquid assets: both Kenny Dalglish and Ruud Gullit had to sell players before they could buy.

It is clear that the chosen sample covers a range of different contexts and situations, despite the absence of a truly successful club. However, the activities of IMUSA at Manchester United suggest that success on the pitch is not always enough to dampen opposition to various club strategies, and indeed some of the consequent trends can stir up more antagonism (as King has shown).[127] As one United fan put it to the Football Taskforce public meeting in Manchester in 1998, 'the Southerners have priced fans out', 'fans' here presumably referring to young local lads.[128] The success of Manchester United depends to a large degree on the business practices of the 1990s, which can in turn breed resentment because of its differential effects on sections of the crowd.

The ISA meeting

The research was conducted in four different parts via four different methods, all pulled together under the conceptual umbrella of contestation. The first, observation of the meeting, simply involved observing the proceedings, noting what happened at the ISA meeting attended, its operation and basic

[127] King 1997a
[128] FA minutes of Government's Football Taskforce, public meeting in Manchester, 5 February 1998

characteristics. This particularly included the numbers present, the age and gender make-up of the meeting, the way the meeting was conducted, the 'sort' of people present, the 'sort' of people who actively participated, the issues and strategies raised by members, and the responses of the committee to these suggestions.

It was obviously not straightforward to assess the class background of people present, but conclusions could still be drawn on the basis of the language used (the construction of sentences, the use of swearing, and issues around restricted codes of discourse),[129] the sort of ideas put across (working class fans are obviously more likely to urge passionately for 'militant' or direct action), even to some extent the manner of dress. A meeting characterised by swearing and lack of 'respect' for the rules of debate (like not allowing others to finish, personalising the argument, abusing others etc), where suggestions for action are often 'confrontational' and ignore or reject inclusive approaches (such as seeking to meet the club to discuss issues) can be fairly categorised as essentially working class or traditional in outlook. There were, on the other hand, a number of very 'correctly' spoken, articulate fans dressed in suits present at these meetings, plus others who noted their business background prior to making their contribution. There is obviously little that can be made of this information, other than to suggest the presence of an element of professional or middle class representation at the meeting.

While such observations cannot offer any hard conclusions as to the sort of people involved in the ISA, and they were not used for any such purpose, attending the meetings was invaluable in creating a sense of who was present, which could then be used in conjunction with other sources of information for further analysis on the question of the demography of the active ISA ranks. I also resolved not to interject in the meeting, so as not to interfere with its 'natural' process, except at Newcastle and Leicester, where the chairpersons specifically invited me (as a Liverpool fan) to brief the members on progress in the Hillsborough justice campaign, or to comment

[129] Bernstein 1973

on ISAs in general. These interventions happened outside the main business of the meeting on both occasions.

The Questionnaire[130]

The second part of the research was, where possible, also carried out at the meeting, and involved sampling the opinions of the membership: questionnaires were handed out at the meeting, with the ISA chairman or contact on hand to explain what it was about (and thus provide any extra legitimacy needed). The survey form noted my own fandom, so establishing my credentials as a football fan and not some detached or disinterested academic. This openness was both to avoid accusations of 'ivory tower' academics prodding into the lives of 'ordinary' people,[131] and, more importantly, to establish my position as a football 'colleague' and someone who actively and passionately follows the game in a personal capacity, thereby placing me within a common frame of reference with them, what Taylor and Bogdan call 'establishing rapport'.[132] The hoped-for consequence was to locate me – the outsider and researcher – in such a fashion within their set up so as, first, to avoid or minimise the possibility that my presence would have an untoward impact upon the proceedings, by giving the correct impression of my interests and reasons for being there. This meant avoiding the wrong impression that I was there in pursuit only of career advancement by pointing to my credentials as an engaged researcher, and a football fan in my own right elsewhere. It appeared that the actual outcome was to enable a more open and 'equal' engagement with participants.

The questionnaire was a simple self-completing form, covering 21 questions, handed out either to the committee members (at a committee meeting, as at BIFA), or members if it was an AGM (as at SISA, LCISA and INUSA). Since on no occasion did the committee have to formally vote against a tactic or idea raised by members, it was not thought important to distinguish between the two elements of the group. On some occasions, I read the questions out

[130] One of the questionnaires is reproduced in Appendix One.
[131] See Moore 1996 and 1997 on how working class communities increasingly refuse to co-operate with official research into their lives.

to members and filled in the answers they gave, both to save time, and to allow the members to enjoy the meeting as they wished. The vast majority of the questions addressed identical topics across the ISAs, though a set of detailed stadium questions was not asked of Sheffield United or Leicester City supporters, since at the time of the research into those two ISAs, the issue of moving ground or redeveloping existing facilities was not a live one (although a few months after the fieldwork at LCISA, Leicester City announced their intention to build a new ground, a decision reflected in the subsequent interview with the ISA contact). The question of stadium redevelopment was at that time operationally relevant only to Newcastle and Southampton fans, and concerned the features they would like to see incorporated into their next stadium, regardless of legal constraints, financial considerations or ground location.

The number of forms returned obviously depended on how many people were present, but while the sample was not large, it provides a sense of what the active members think on a range of issues. Crucially, since it is the active membership that determines the policies of each of these ISAs, the attitudes of non-active members are essentially irrelevant. No attempt was made to approach such members via mailshots, since their opinions do not feed directly into ISA processes, and, at any rate, these methods often fail. Since the members present at meetings themselves decide on ISA policy and agenda, then the size of sample was not a great issue. The forms were analysed, in the light of the schools of traditionality and new FAPL fandom, discussed previously, with the aim of constructing some 'bottom'-up' data. Additionally, the form was advertised on BIFA's official e-mail discussion list, which generated a few more responses, but again numbers were limited and ultimately this sample was dropped from the analysis: the complex issues around research via the Internet, notably the social stratification of the population of cyberspace,[133] made it an unsuitable method and sample for this research, particularly in view of the fact that response rates were low.

[132] Taylor and Bodgan 1984, page 36
[133] Selwyn and Robson 1998

The ISA Documents

The third step was a simple form of content analysis of policy documents, reports, letters and members' newsletters produced by the ISAs. Content analysis, while it can degenerate into simple number counting exercises with no connections to or conclusions for theory, is potentially useful for highlighting the stated views and meaning immanent in the content, as well as the discourses and ideologies that underpin and inform the content of communication.[134] With the important caveats of noting any special circumstances that could present a false picture, and of noting the omissions, content analysis was particularly useful in this context in identifying the discursive and ideological frameworks that support or contribute to ISA values, and the priorities for action or attention within their world-view. It can also create a general picture that other comparable sets of data can be dropped into, and for suggesting general theories to be tested by other researchers with other data.

Since ISAs often trade on publicity, or seek a role in decision-making processes, projecting their views, image and suggestions via the media and other means, trying to frame the agenda, are very important campaign tactics. Central to this are ISA reports and documents, articles in fanzines, press releases and open letters which set out their position on a range of issues. Simple search and examination of such documents for inherent ideologies, models of fandom, and points of view put forward, can demonstrate the nature of the fandom in these groups, and so the extent and nature of contestation. The ideas in each document, and the different policy statements and recommendations made by the ISA were compared to the two categories of traditional and new fandom. These are not conceptualised in terms of strict dichotomies, but as broad representations of 'old' and 'new' football fandom. Locating ISA culture in either of these categories on each relevant issue avoids the over-strict categorisation and static position that King criticises in many uses of hegemony in the sociology of sport; more importantly, it allows for the precise nature of ISA fandom to be identified,

[134] Berelson 1952; Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1996

rather than imposing an imprecise or excessively rigid structure on potentially fluid (and as King points out, even contradictory) positions.[135] The policies that the ISA support and defend shape its public face, and thus form the basis on which it is assessed and judged by existing and potential members, the media and club. Thus, ISA documentation is vital to a full understanding of its culture, role and approach.

The Interview[136]

The final part of the fieldwork was an in-depth, semi-structured interview with the ISA contact or leader: this was conducted over the phone, having already met the contact in person. About 20 generic questions were drawn up, yielding sub-questions from their responses, plus others added where appropriate, according to the position of the team and the club, and the progress of the interview. Taylor and Bogdan argue that an in-depth interview by necessity involves 'repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants',[137] but the work patterns and responsibilities of the participants made this impossible: with their timetables in mind, phone interviews broken into half an hour segments were not only more practical to transcribe, but more fundamentally, much easier for the participants, and meant that their enthusiasm for the interview did not flag. Of course, this approach means that non-verbal communication was lost to the researcher,[138] but since the issues at hand were straightforward and did not involve anything that may have required concealment, or anything that strayed into illegality, this was not deemed particularly significant. A full copy of the transcript was then sent to the interviewee for comments, in line with empowerment theory,[139] to ensure that the outcome did not attribute unintended or absent meaning to their answers: any alterations to the transcript were examined before further analysis. Confidence when necessary was kept, though this arose on one occasion only.

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[135] King 1997a, page 343
[136] A list of the generic questions that formed the core of each interview is reproduced in Appendix One.
[137] Taylor and Bogdan 1984, page 77
[138] King E 1996

This approach covers all the elements of an ISA: the meeting is an example of activism in practice, the membership offer the 'genuine' popular view, the interview with the leadership offers 'top-down' and historical perspectives, and the documents the 'reality' of what the ISA calls for.

Methodological Issues

There are, of course, also potential problems with this analysis: as noted previously, visual categorisations of class based on dress, manner of speaking and the revealed level of linguistic ability, and opinions proffered within the larger context of arguing a specific point of view are hardly unproblematic, but can still be useful if handled with care, and combined with data on the impact of ticket prices on attendance, and on employment status. Any such analysis carries with it problems of categorisation: as noted in Chapter One, the two schools of fandom have not been constructed as a dichotomy, nor is it argued that every fan or ISA can be fitted into one 'camp' or the other. The intention was to establish the *proximity* of the ISAs to the theorised schools of fandom on different issues, and to identify the questions on which they diverge and converge with either form of fandom. It is almost certain that the ISAs fall entirely into neither category, but what is significant is *how* close they get to each on each issue, and how we can relationally locate each ISA to these schools of fandom. Differences between ISAs can then be related to the clubs' different league positions, and the different issues and forces each must face and negotiate.

The Process

Essentially, the process worked well: there was little or no antagonism to my presence at meetings, certainly not once my role and purpose had been explained. My presence did not seem to affect the meetings, and the range of opinion that could have been predicted in advance indeed came to the fore: issues of a relatively delicate nature were raised, such as gossip and the abuse of rivals, as were more mundane organisational matters. The SISA meeting for instance saw some passionate, 'militant' suggestions for direct

[139] Roberts 1981

confrontation with the club in an intense debate; the overall tone of this meeting may be taken to mean that my presence was peripheral, if not altogether neutral, and not at all a hindrance to the 'natural' process of the meeting. Obviously, my introduction into a meeting in itself represents a clear intervention, but it appears that this did not have a material effect upon proceedings. Given the situation each club was in, the ideas and opinions that could have been predicted were duly mentioned, and so it is safe to conclude that my presence did not deflect the otherwise 'natural' process.

The meetings went smoothly, and most people who filled in the forms seemed to enjoy having someone interested in their views, partly maybe because the two purposes of the research (the major, academic, focus, and the minor, tangential desire to learn about ISAs in order for Liverpool fans to potentially create their own) were explained to every member approached with a form. The full sample was used for analysis in each instance: this was possible because the chosen sample was rather limited in size, and, with the exception of Southampton, the meetings were relatively small. But since they are the committed membership, and the committed fans whose activism and presence allows them to shape the ISA and its policies in ways the non-active membership cannot, focusing almost exclusively upon them may, for purposes of this research, be deemed valid and justifiable. Given that the ISAs depend on active members to create the democratic element of its operations (none use postal ballots etc), then those who attend are obviously the important element of the ISA, and to this extent, their views are those that carry importance in assessments of the cultural significance of the group. There is a clear division in any fan group between the active and passive membership, and in these cases, the passive membership have little day-to-day significance, except in the sense of legitimating the group: therefore, there seemed no particular value in approaching the passive element.

In one case, that of Southampton, questionnaires had to be collected in two batches. The sheer scale of the emergency meeting in June 1997 meant that surveying members' opinions became operationally difficult, and later in the year, the contact collected another batch of forms at a meeting that I did not

attend. The only possible issue was the fact that, due to an unfortunate oversight, questions on Southampton's new stadium were included only in the second set. The first version asked whether members would like to see terraces at the next Southampton ground, but did not ask the more detailed 'stadium feature' questions included in the second version. Clearly, questions about the location and nature of the stadium can illuminate much else besides, but because, fortuitously, nothing of significance happened in the interval between the meeting in June 1997 and the further meeting at which the second batch of forms was collected, splitting the questions into two did not become an issue. Additionally, an administrative error meant that BIFA and LCISA members were not asked a couple of (relatively minor) questions asked of the other groups, but data on the missing questions was available through other evidence.

The collection of documents was slow, but, through the Internet and the ISA contact, a range of articles, documents and reports relating to a number of years was collected for each group. Interviewing the leaders or contacts of the ISAs was also straightforward: the interviews were semi-structured in nature and taped over the phone, but always after I had met each contact in person and established some sort of rapport. Additional questions were included as and when they came up. Creating a sense of commonality about my experiences as a fan and those of the people I was interviewing obviously stands as a important part of any research process,[140] but in the case of these interview (and indeed, the survey element discussed above), it seemed peculiarly strong. Once the interviewees were made aware of my football background, my intentions and, indeed, my personal attitudes towards the issues under discussion, they reacted by providing an equally open and willing response: the flow of information was strong, and their co-operation obvious, often beyond the necessary and the requisite. The use of the interviewees' vernacular around football also helped create a sense of commonality, and aided the process of the interview.

[140] Giulianotti 1995, page 15

Once the interview was completed, a full transcript was sent to the interviewed, both satisfying the methodological requirement that they should see what they had said,[141] and to ensure that there was nothing on the tape they had not intended to say, which put the pool of material that could be used beyond doubt. Apart from respecting requests for confidentiality, some sought to clarify and/or re-emphasise points made in the interview, which was also valuable in that I could be more certain that what they had said was truly meant. The power relationship therefore between researcher and participants[142] was equalised to some extent by recognising the right of the interviewed to a chance to review what they had said.

In one or two cases, transcription revealed other questions that were missed and should have been asked, or other issues arose after the interview was carried out. Such questions were then put to the contact, and inserted in the relevant places in the transcript, and the fact recorded and marked in the transcript. However, it is worth emphasising that conceptually and methodologically this split process was inconsequential. The further questions were often attitudinal or historical in nature, and given that in the meantime the condition and position of the club had not radically changed, the delay was not significant.

Only in one case – that of Newcastle – did the club undergo any significant change in the meantime. In this case, a tabloid paper video-recorded two executive directors, who were also major shareholders, Freddy Shepherd and Douglas Hall, in a Spanish brothel in March 1998, in which they verbally insulted the women of the north-east, suggesting that Newcastle supporters were stupid, claiming that club merchandise, such as shirts, was over-priced and boasted that they were personally profiting from the sale of merchandising. They also insulted the club's ex-manager, Kevin Keegan, and star striker, Alan Shearer. The outrage was such that, after a fortnight of media stories, massive pressure from INUSA and from non-executive directors on the Board of Directors, unfavourable City opinion and dipping

[141] Roberts 1981
[142] O'Connell Davidson and Layder 1994, page 124

share price, even questions in the House of Commons and further revelations alleging drug-taking, they were forced to resign (but not to sell their shares in the club), and ex-chairman, John Hall, resumed the charge of the club until the end of May 1998. This occurred between the collection of the first set of forms at a committee meeting, and attendance at the full AGM, held two days after the directors had resigned from the Board. How this affected opinions concerning floatation, the arrival of the 'money-men' in football, the best way to finance a club is obviously open to conjecture. The most that can be said about this incident is that it sparked a debate about how to finance and run clubs, about the kind of people becoming involved with the game, and how fans might intercede in the processes and structures of clubs: how it directly affected Newcastle fans' views is not clear.

Once more, there was a willingness amongst fans to discuss the issues, and the fact that there were people interested in the work of the ISA was undoubtedly a source of pleasure or interest to both members approached with forms, and the ISA contacts, two of whom noted how much they had enjoyed discussing their ISA, and indeed had as a result realised the full scope of its work. The fact that I had personally met the contact before the interview, had already discussed some of the issues (and had previously collaborated with the BIFA contact on other matters in the role of an activist), helped smooth the interview process: establishing myself as a genuine fan capable of asking meaningful (academic) questions undoubtedly had a similar effect. In one case, I supplied the LCISA contact with (publicly available) reports or phone numbers of other ISA contacts, and in another case, the SISA contact asked for my involvement (as a fan) with a pro-terraces campaign, an involvement which would have been sought and given regardless of my academic role (due to my prior and continuing involvement with a Liverpool fanzine). As already pointed out, some of the contacts were co-operative far beyond the requests actually made, and helped with the process in additional ways that I would have struggled to achieve or never even thought of asking for.

My role as an activist undoubtedly helped create access for the research, in demonstrating to the ISA contact and the members alike my intentions and objectives, and personal background of fandom aside from my academic interest. However, while this history of activism was central to the generation of entrée, in no way did it affect the actual research carried out once entrée had been created. The baggage that goes with being an activist was discarded, once the actual research process was under way, and my role become one of academic researcher once more. Thus, activism helped the research progress, but did not determine or unduly affect the nature of that process, and my personal points of view expressed through that activism were not allowed to shape the research process in ways that cannot be justified. Potter argues for 'self-reflexivity' to be central to the research process,[143] and seeks conscious reflection on the methods used, the research process, and the position of the researcher within that process. In this case, I consciously took my personal, ideological positions out of the process, by allowing the research participants to develop their own points within the interview, by unpacking the concepts used in the process and not allowing personal ideological or academic baggage to allow contested or contestable concepts to be used as given or unarguable, and through discussions particularly with the ISA contacts interviewed, by revealing at the outset my intentions, and values and positions as they became operationally relevant within the research process.

This process allowed the research to address the role of the ISA within the wider history of organised football fan groups, their origins, objectives, modes of operation, demographic profile, their significance within modern football, and, particularly, the extent to which they represent traditionality and the interests of working class fans, and thus the extent to which they resist the capital and political project at the heart of the transformation of English football in the 1990s.

[143] Potter 1996, page 187

Chapter Three - Sheffield United and BIFA[144]

Formed in 1889, Sheffield United (SUFC) have a long and proud tradition: since the Second World War, they have been in every division of the Football League, winning only the Second Division in 1952 and the Fourth Division in 1981 in that time, and spending nearly as many years outside the top division as in it. Traditionally well supported, and seen by many as the primary club in Sheffield, United found themselves in financial difficulty in the late 1970s and 1980s, and had to be saved from bankruptcy by chairman Reg Brealey in 1981. The club were promoted to the FAPL in 1990 and remained there until 1993-94, when defeat at Chelsea on the last day of the season saw them relegated to the First Division again. Brealey then endured a year-long 'chairman out' campaign from supporters before selling his majority shareholding to businessman, Mike McDonald, for £3.5m. McDonald became chairman in December 1995. Sheffield United then conducted a reverse take-over of his company Conrad Plc, and floated on the stock market in January 1997, leading to the creation of one board for the PLC and one for the football club. The floatation capitalised United at some £29.7m, with shares opening trading at 60p, and at one point reaching 145p, before dropping to 74.5p by March 1997. The team twice nearly achieved promotion to the FAPL, before McDonald resigned as club chairman in March 1998 (though not as PLC chairman) following a dispute with team manager Nigel Spackman and shareholder Kevin McCabe. Late in 1998, Italian investors were reported to have bought McDonald's remaining 13% shareholding for £3.25m.

Blades Independent Fans Association (BIFA)

BIFA essentially began as a response to Brealey's running of United, and its decline under his chairmanship. Season 1993-4 saw United in turmoil: just when the club needed funds, to allow, if nothing else, for the redevelopment of Bramall Lane as demanded by the Taylor Report, the club was relegated

[144] The fieldwork for this chapter was conducted in March-July 1997, and the interview was with Tim Pinto, BIFA Steering Committee member with particular responsibility for ISA liaison. The meeting attended was a Steering Committee meeting in March 1997.

from the FAPL (and so lost much of its Sky revenue) and saw attendances drop. Transfer decisions were widely seen as directly contributing to that relegation, with star striker Brian Deane sold at the start of 1993-94, a decision that symbolised decline not just in the immediate damage to the team, but in the refusal to allow manager Dave Bassett to re-invest the £2.7m received for Deane. Resentment at this was exacerbated by rumours of large debts, Brealey's decision to call back a £750,000 loan he had made to the club, the poor start to the 1994-95 season, and the fact that United had demolished the John Street Stand at Bramall Lane, but had failed to begin re-development work as promised.

The centrality of Brealey to BIFA is undeniable: those who formed BIFA all cite Brealey and his stewardship of the club as the spark behind the creation of the group in May 1994, and half the members surveyed during the fieldwork cited the struggle with Brealey as the reason they joined the group. A membership survey by Steering Committee member Tim Pinto found similar levels of dissatisfaction: 66% felt that BIFA's greatest success was the removal of Brealey.[145] However, while this fits the traditional stereotype that fans only become activists when they want the directors to provide funds for players, BIFA also had other objectives, as clear from the preliminary objectives at the first meeting in May 1994: 'Brealey out, Bassett stays, transfer money to be provided, a Blades fan on the board'.[146] Pinto suggests that BIFA also sought detailed information and assurances from Brealey on the direction of the club. Obviously United's slow decline provided the vital context and the spark, and to that extent, BIFA can be located within more general fan traditions of activism, but on the other hand, Pinto noted how BIFA sought an exchange of views and, conceptualising fans as more than just consumers, expected the chairman to make himself accountable and explain how he intended to revive the club's fortunes. Brealey was ultimately expected either to invest sufficient funds in the club to allow it to genuinely compete (operating from the ubiquitous fan agenda of the desire for

[145] Pinto 1996, page 4
[146] 'How BIFA started', *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/bifa.html*

success), or was to withdraw and leave the club in the hands of people who were prepared to make funds available to the manager.

Pinto highlights how much *personal* opposition to Brealey developed once his refusal to talk to fans became obvious, and while at the start there was discontent at United's decline, BIFA's agenda was for Brealey to detail his plan to restore United's fortunes, and confirm his commitment to the club. Hence they sought a dialogue, requesting meetings with the chairman within a discourse of reasonableness, rather than simply demand his resignation. They also clearly started from the premise that Brealey had a duty to explain himself to fans, 'to improve communications between the club and its fans',[147] and to outline his vision for the future of, and commitment to, the Blades. As the original protest letter to the local football paper, the *Green'Un*, details, BIFA were 'not seeking to be simply a protest movement with purely negative and confrontational aims', but felt that 'a fans' shareholding co-operative could provide a long-term stake in the club's future'.[148]

Clearly therefore, BIFA was not a reaction to 1990s transformation at United, but has its roots in more traditional motivations for fan activism, namely club decline and confusion over its future, or a lack of communication with fans. Importantly, however, half of those surveyed for this fieldwork had a wider long-term agenda of seeking formal representation for fans, a model of the relationship between fan and club that fundamentally rejects FAPL values: eleven of the seventeen activists surveyed here argued that BIFA should remain independent of the club, and able to influence its decisions, and over half suggested that BIFA should actively seek some *formal* input into the club's decision-making processes. FAPL concepts of consumerism, choice and the market model of the crowd are clearly absent in BIFA's construction of fandom, where fans have a right to consultation, information and ultimately some sort of formalised input into the decision-making process. *A priori*, BIFA are seeking to intervene in processes the FAPL model considers beyond

[147] Report by BIFA chair Paul Blomfield on the creation of the Consultative Committee, September 1996; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue3/goodtalk.htm*
[148] Both quotes from 'Revolution', the original 1994 letter calling for the creation of BIFA;

their role. Dominant conceptualisations of supporters as consumers cannot allow them any real input into the decision-making process, and nowhere in such a model are fans genuinely empowered. To seek a role in that, and campaign for a right to genuine consultation, is to fracture some of the central cultural logic of the FAPL, and construct the club as a social rather than a commercial institution. However, whether such an objective fits traditional discourses is open to doubt, involving not just voluntary commitment and engagement, but also a sense of co-operation with the club that may be lacking within traditional working class discourses. Whether traditionality would even accept this as a legitimate role for fans to seek within the club is equally debatable, and clearly such a notion draws much more on FSA and fanzine culture than on anything else.

The particular aim of installing a fan on the board (one of BIFA's original objectives, listed in the 1995 Fans' Charter, and raised many times by members, and the Steering Committee) represents an important rejection of core FAPL values, resisting the specialisation of club practices and the presumed expertise of its professional staff. This objective was the primary lesson drawn later from United's deteriorating financial situation in 1998, and the specific problems posed by Mike McDonald as chairman: the need to have an elected fan on the board 'with full voting rights, not just invited to certain meetings to discuss certain topics'[149] was singled out as a priority campaign issue, and was declared one of BIFA's four main objectives for 1999 (along with the continuation of the Consultative Committee, the Fans' Survey and the *Meet the Board* fans forum).[150] United of course opposed fan representation on the grounds that clubs are increasingly specialised commercial operations,[151] making the presence and input of a fan inappropriate: this presents the non-football activities of the club as separate

reproduced at *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/greenun.html*

[149] Steering Committee meeting minutes, 7 October 1998, *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/bifa_sc/07_10_98.htm*

[150] Steering Committee meeting minutes, November 1998, *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/bifa_sc/toc11_98.htm*

[151] Minutes of Fans' Forum, January 1996; according to minutes of the 1998 AGM, attended by director Kevin McCabe, McCabe 'seemed to think the fans' representative would attend to discuss fans issues, but BIFA would want a fans' representative to be a full Board member'. *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/forum4.htm*

from the football side or the fans. To this extent, BIFA resist important parts of the FAPL project, though not however in ways that contribute to, or underpin, traditionality. While traditionality sees a role for fans, this is not necessarily expressed in terms of formalised access to the decision-making process, and hence BIFA draw upon standard FSA theorisations of the role and rights of supporters rather than on traditional conceptualisations of the position of fans within football, even though the latter share the FSA view that fans have a right to information and input.

Apart from installing a fan on the board, the original Fans' Charter drawn up by BIFA also included demands for information on how the Board intended to secure promotion, for a 'new partnership' between fan and the Board based on regular consultation, and for specific funds raised by fans to be given to the manager for transfers (the 'Blades Revival Fund').[152] This agenda, including the later development and formalisation of the Consultative Committee, rejects modern attempts to re-define the relationship between fans and clubs around consumption, and shares the FSA mentality of fans as informed and central parts of the game, not its consumers.[153] Such a view is visible in one of the Fans' Forum, where the idea of splitting shareholding to prevent single ownership of the club was raised: [154] the 1998 AGM also saw concerns voiced about how many shares were held by large financial institutions. The desire to split shareholdings constructs the club as simply on loan to its current owners, and not ultimately their's to do with as they see fit (unlike for instance at Chelsea, Manchester United). The business logic legitimated as part of transformation cannot accept such a position, allowing, as it does, chairmen to make decisions as much in their interests as those of the club. The concept of fans raising ring-fenced funds for transfers (through the Revival Fund) is also interesting and somewhat revolutionary in the context of the FAPL, in that although the sums involved will never be large (£33,375 in May 1995,[155] later rising to £100,000 per annum, according to

[152] Fans' Charter, BIFA 1995
[153] FSA recruitment flyer, 1996, 'Philosophers of the world unite'
[154] Minutes of Fans' Forum, January 1996
[155] *Communiqué* issue 3, May 1995, page 2

McDonald),[156] this does bypass the Board, and so increases, in a small way, fan involvement, though it does not of course represent fan control (since the manager still decides who to spend the money on, and indeed whether to spend it at all).

What is interesting is that the forced cultural change of the FAPL was actually attempted at United in the 1980s: Armstrong notes how Brealey, with his Conservative Christian background, sought to re-define fandom at Bramall Lane by introducing family and corporate incentive schemes based around ideologies common at FAPL grounds today.[157] Prices increased (a season ticket that cost £28 in 1981 rose 310% to £87 in 1989-90), and new constituencies of support were sought. While it is impossible to say how this affected the crowd, there is no mention or evidence of organised resistance, or attempts by supporters to challenge the club in the face of cultural change and possible exclusion. The climate of the age was of course totally different, with fans unsure as to their power or ability to organise, but it is nonetheless interesting and significant that there were no attempts to reverse or limit that process.

What started out as an attempt to obtain information and assurances about the direction of the club however soon became a much more traditional campaign to remove the chairman: the circumstances surrounding this shift should not be ignored, since they affect how BIFA developed, and highlight its non-hostile approach. Pinto reports that, for many in BIFA, Brealey's refusal to answer questions, particularly on United's finances, failure to attend meetings as promised, lack of communication, failure to start redevelopment work on the John Street Stand as promised, and reports that the club had tried to sell players to pay for this latter development stirred many fans into more purposive action, moving BIFA from an agenda of consultation and accountability to an old-fashioned anti-chairman campaign. The only time fans met the chairman was when a handful of fans (dressed as Santa Claus) conducted a small demonstration outside Brealey's house at

[156] Minutes of Fans' Forum, January 1996
[157] Armstrong 1998, pages 129-137

Christmas 1994, and the chairman invited them in for a mince pie, which as Pinto notes, hardly constitutes 'formal or productive dialogue with the chairman'. Essentially, transformation at Bramall Lane was not the prime driving force behind BIFA, and it was a much more standard reaction to a sense of decline at the club. This manifested itself in the growth in membership, rising 600 members in three weeks in 1995,[158] and growing to 1711 in the next eight months, making BIFA then the largest ISA. This, and subsequent membership trends suggest that, for a lot of members, it was more standard problems within the club and the team that generated and mediated interest, and not some deep-rooted transformation, or sense of alienation or disenfranchisement resulting from it.

While the response of BIFA to this developing situation includes some standard examples of football protest, not only were the traditional tactics employed at Manchester City, Southampton and Brighton[159] avoided (noisy demonstrations, pitch invasions, 'abuse', 'intimidation' and actual violence), they were openly considered problematic, in that they would allow SUFC and the media to portray BIFA as a dangerous, violent group, and so damage their credibility (the lesson that BIFA drew from City fans' campaign against Swales). The range of tactics and strategies continually employed by BIFA are clear testimony to the absence, or suppression, of traditionality within its ranks, including sponsored walks, votes of no confidence, (foiled) attempts to hang sarcastic banners inside Bramall Lane on match-day, balloon demonstrations and displays, motions calling for a club EGM, issuing press releases, staging car-park demonstrations, attending the club AGM to ask embarrassing questions, distributing leaflets round the ground, organising Fans' Forums, manning a stall outside Bramall Lane before matches, and ringing the bells at the church next to it to celebrate Brealey's departure. BIFA indeed played on their 'sensible' and 'responsible' approach to campaigning: one issue of the *Communiqué* newsletter notes with pride the fact that BIFA never revealed the name of Brealey's home village nor sent

[158] *Communiqué*, issue 2, February 1995, page 3
[159] North and Hudson, 1997

him obscene post, nor harassed anyone.[160] The group also made a point of condemning a Sheffield United fan who assaulted a linesman in 1998 and disassociated themselves from him, and aligned themselves fully behind the Lane Watch scheme, whereby fans could complain about the actions or behaviour of other fans inside Bramall Lane.[161] Essentially, BIFA operated like a United-focused version of the FSA, sharing its agenda of tactics (including symbolic events like sponsoring a plaque at the house where United were formed in 1889),[162] and delivery methods, with the seventeen members surveyed here discovering BIFA through the media, leaflets, fanzines and friends.

There was equally an upper working or lower middle class sense of 'moral' behaviour that restrained BIFA in its operations and activities, resulting in a strong sense of respectability about its operations both with regard to the chairman and more generally, as in the green and red card demonstrations organised against Brealey. As well as the product of BIFA's demography, such an agenda can be seen as the mediation of traditionality by a specific need for good publicity, but the extent to which these tactics reject traditionality is so total that this seems unlikely, since there is no scope left at all within BIFA's operations for traditionality. This suggests that traditional elements of the crowd were maybe lacking in the organisation: Pinto did note a few members who wanted BIFA to adopt more radical or direct agenda and tactics, but they were prevented from doing so, the campaign strategies sanctioned and operated by the Committee remained essentially respectable and non-traditional, and the issue seems to have died away. The Steering Committee for instance vetted 1500 Christmas cards posted to Brealey by BIFA members, with any abuse tippexed out; BIFA plans to 'Bring a Brick' to Bramall Lane to highlight Brealey's failure to re-build the John Street Stand were dropped over fears about 'hooligans' using the bricks, and plans for a mock funeral march to Bramall Lane before a game to highlight the 'death' of United were cancelled once SUFC declared that match a commemoration for

[160] *Communiqué*, number 2, February 1995, page 4
[161] Consultative Committee meeting minutes, November 1997, http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue10/consult.htm

VE Day. Instead, invitations for Brealey and other Directors to come and speak to BIFA meetings were repeatedly issued and ignored (like at an open public meeting in November 1995). Indeed, the extent of reasonable discourses is clear from the secret meeting that BIFA held with Mike McDonald in a Sheffield hotel before he bought control of the club.

The fact that circumstances and the rising anger of Blades forced BIFA into overtly anti-Brealey campaigning from October 1994 should not be allowed to divert attention from the other elements of the BIFA agenda, which included empowerment and consultation, and the ultimate objective of fans electing a supporter onto the board. This suggests that while BIFA are essentially reluctant rebels, and not the cutting edge of traditionality (which should be no surprise given its demographic make-up - see below), their reaction to team failure in the 'usual' ways fans are expected to carried with it the seeds of a 'political' agenda to pursue.

The Demography of BIFA

In demographic terms, BIFA is a broad church organisation that neither rejected any members, nor fell into exclusively representing particular sections of the crowd. Importantly, within that context, United clearly has certain demographic and cultural contexts that fundamentally affect its fanbase, and therefore in turn BIFA's membership, which highlights the need to contextualise specific clubs and their crowds. BIFA itself has a wide demographic spectrum, though it is heavily male, which fits football fan groups more generally. The issue of women is discussed below, but BIFA is clearly a male organisation: of the fifteen Steering Committee members present at a meeting in March 1997, only two were female (including the 1997-98 treasurer), and only three of the twenty seven then on the Committee were female. Pinto found that 86% of the membership in 1996 were male,[163] a level of female membership found in other years as well, with women making up 15.6% of members in November 1994.[164] Steering

[162] *Communiqué*, number 5, May 1995, page 3
[163] Pinto 1996, page 1
[164] *Communiqué* number 1, November 1994, page 3

Committee members were aged from the late 20s to the late 50s (bar one teenage girl, who attended meetings with her father). While this does not fit the demography of the FSA,[165] it does tally with the complaint that the Bramall Lane crowd is generally getting older, and that younger generations of fans are noticeably attending less. Pinto's survey found only 17% of BIFA members under the age of 30,[166] which correlates with other pressure groups who have found attracting younger members increasingly hard. The proportion of younger fans prepared to join a representative 'political' organisation like BIFA is of course only a fraction of the younger fans who attend games: not only do younger Blades clearly have more enjoyable things to do with their time, maybe the effects of Sky's 'hyperbole and hysteria'[167] are also being felt, with young fans de-politicised and disengaged, and lacking the attitudes and/or experiences required to generate and sustain interest in groups like BIFA.[168]

It also seemed to fit in terms of profession and economic class. Chaired by Labour councillor and University administrator, Paul Blomfield (up until October 1998), the BIFA Steering Committee includes accountants, graduates, teachers and other professionals, a level of professional skills also found to some extent by Pinto's survey. According to this profile, BIFA are clearly not the repository of the Sheffield working class excluded (in whatever ways) from football: only 16% of the membership were unemployed, only 4% of the employed sample earned less than £10,000 per year and fully 46% earned over £15,000 per year.[169] The members surveyed for this fieldwork were not working class fans facing exclusion either: only three of the seventeen surveyed said their attendance patterns had been adversely affected by recent price rises at Bramall Lane, and Pinto noted that nearly all the Steering Committee have season tickets (and travelled to the

[165] 51% of FSA members in 1989 were aged between 21 and 30, while 9.1% were female; SNCCFR 1989
[166] Pinto 1996, page 1
[167] Armstrong 1998, page 322
[168] 'Attitudes' in the sense of the preparedness to voluntary commitment and engage with political issues.
[169] Pinto 1996, page 1

majority of away games): 46% of his sample also held season tickets.[170] However, he also suggested that BIFA does have members affected by price rises, a problem found more generally within the United crowd, particularly, as mentioned, among younger elements. More generally, Pinto reports that in the early days of the organisation, visibly traditional (male) fans did join in numbers, not seemingly to protect their own economic or class-based interests, but in support of attempts to remove Brealey. However, such members tended to leave the actual campaigning work to others, and were unprepared to commit the necessary time and energy to it. But in general, BIFA is obviously not the preferred vehicle (if there is one) for the expression of frustrations caused by deep-rooted processes of transformation. It is interesting to note that Armstrong's decade-long study of Sheffield United 'hooligans', [171] during the period of Brealey's attempted transformation at United, makes no reference to BIFA, or any other supporter organisations, with potential implications for the class make-up of such groups. The pressure BIFA bring to bear on United with regard to prices (discussed below) is not therefore designed to deal with problems faced by actual members, but are more in the interests of supporters generally within the Bramall Lane crowd.

BIFA's racial make-up was also similar to other fan groups: all the members of the Steering Committee were white, as was the entire sample in Pinto's survey,[172] which is maybe unsurprising given the ethnic mix of Sheffield: the immigrant population of the city numbers just 25,000, or 4% of the total population.[173] BIFA is clearly therefore a 'white' organisation in terms of active and passive membership, but as discussed below, this does not prevent it from actively taking up anti-racist campaigning work. This suggests a similar trend to that found in the FSA, where socially aware and progressive discourses were generated and driven not by the membership profile as such, but by a more generally political or 'moral' agenda.

[170] Pinto 1996, page 2
[171] Armstrong 1998
[172] Pinto 1996, page 2

BIFA's membership trends also highlight some factors common to all supporter groups, including the motivation of many fans in joining. In this case, it is possible to plot membership levels against the seriousness of the situation at the club. At the height of the anti-Brealey struggle (autumn 1994), membership reached 1,000, and rose to over 1,700 by the following February. Once that campaign succeeded and Brealey sold his shareholding, membership then fell: Pinto notes how the arrival of McDonald (particularly with his detailed plans for United's development) sapped the activism of many supporters, and membership collapsed to just over 300 by March 1997: the arrival of McDonald seemed to eliminate BIFA's purpose. However, as BIFA attempted to redefine their role in the following six months after the departure of Brealey, membership rose again, reaching 434 by September 1997 and nearly 500 just over a year later. But even then, all within BIFA agreed that getting active membership was becoming even harder as the clear danger represented by Brealey evaporated: as BIFA chair Paul Blomfield noted at the 1997 AGM, 'it's always easier to gain members/attendances at meetings when there are plenty of things to complain about than when everything seems to be going OK'.[174]

Such trends, and the fact that many of the founding members have remained active throughout, suggest that BIFA faces the same problems as other supporter groups, and confirms the view that fans in Britain are de-politicised or de-radicalised, and unwilling to organise themselves into pro-active *political* campaigning groups unless the situation is absolutely desperate: otherwise they are unable to generate the energy, activism and conceptual vision required to create and sustain a representative fans' group. This is very similar to the experiences of the FSA, whose membership almost certainly rose and declined in correlation with the severity of the political situation around football in the 1980s and early 1990s, and disappeared altogether once the over-riding unifying political threat posed by Margaret

[173] Armstrong 1998, page 153
[174] AGM minutes, *Red & White Wizaaard* Issue no 8, http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue8/agm.htm

Thatcher was eliminated.[175] BIFA's history highlights two distinct trends: firstly, the need for a football spark to give voice to more cultural or political issues that can command and exercise fans' interest, and secondly, the need for clear or obvious problems to generate activism. To this extent, BIFA's often reactive nature (particularly in its 'Blades Watch' guise) and the basic motivational factors behind its existence and behind individual membership means it is not a new form of supporter group, but is very similar to older fan groups.

Structure

BIFA bears all the organisational hallmarks of other supporter groups and hence, to a large extent, non-traditionality. The committee structure, formalised agenda, the carefully allocated responsibilities within the Steering Committee, proposing and seconding system for elections to positions of responsibility, and annual general meetings, all found in BIFA, are all features of the FSA, and of course, other non-football voluntary pressure groups. The meeting attended for this fieldwork was formally organised and conducted, with de-personalised discussion and the 'rules of debate' respected. In terms of structure and form, there was essentially no difference between BIFA and any other supporter groups. Equally, BIFA's regular formalised and regularised access to United directors and other high ranking personnel (via Consultative Committees, Fans' Forums, 'Meet the Manager' sessions and invitations for senior club officials to attend the AGM and answer questions (as in 1998 when director Kevin McCabe attended and answered fans' questions) bear the hallmarks of respectable values. The close relations with SUFC are also clear from the fact that the club were prepared to accept £150 from BIFA as sponsorship for a player's kit,[176] from the fact that BIFA wanted to arrange such sponsorship, and from BIFA's participation at the SUFC Open Day in 1998 (and their suggestion that it becomes an annual event), and the invitations issued by BIFA to players to attend their events.

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[175] Nash 1998

[176] Steering Committee meeting minutes, November 1998; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/bifa_sc/toc11_98.htm*

Within the context of a binding constitution and statement of aims, members were elected to places on the Steering Committee on the basis of their willingness, experience and abilities, while in classic FSA fashion, BIFA is entirely self-financing and dependent on fund-raising to sustain itself. Hence the group organised a number of auctions, a Christmas Party, a race night, produced its own fanzine (with a print-run of over 1000), printed T-shirts for the visit of Denmark to Sheffield for Euro96, and sold BIFA car-stickers and badges. Such an approach firmly locates BIFA in the same camp as the FSA, revenue maximisation, since it lacks any financial support bar what they can generate themselves, and have to tailor their campaigns accordingly. BIFA draw up a full annual budget, and account for it to members - no individuals profit from the organisation, nor is anyone paid, and reports to Steering Committee meetings highlight the very tight budgets involved: in January 1999, BIFA reported that it had just over £900 in its account (with membership fees due that same month as well),[177] and decided to use this money to buy club shares in a rights issue planned by United. There was also a certain amount of use made of office equipment at work and equipment owned by members to produce campaign material and administer the group in its early days. Fanzines also proved very important to BIFA's activities, to the point where the group created its own title, *Red and White Wizaaard*, which, though edited by a BIFA member and discussing BIFA campaign issues, also addressed more standard fanzine and non-BIFA issues, and was not created *solely* to discuss BIFA affairs. Communication with members was via the standard routes, regular newsletters, the fanzine, press releases etc, and the organisation held regular General Meetings to decide major policy issues, and feed back information to members. All this locates BIFA within FSA territory, drawing on similar forces and strengths, and exploiting similar contacts within football's 'informal networks',[178] and suggests that BIFA as a representative of the ISA movement in general, can be located within much older trends in fan representation and activism.

[177] Steering Committee meeting minutes, January 1999; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/bifa_sc/toc01_99.htm*
[178] Haynes 1995

But the real importance of BIFA lies not just in who attends or participates, nor how the group operates, but in what it seeks to do, and it is here that a mixed picture emerges on the key issue of its sub-culture, and therefore the levels of contestation.

Merchandising and Commercialisation

One of the most significant threads running through the anti-Brealey campaign, and BIFA agenda generally, is the need to put United on a secure financial footing, a context that directly affects attitudes towards merchandise and commercial development in general. The declining situation of the club on and off the pitch provides the key context in this regard, combining with BIFA's membership profile to create an organisation that broadly accepted the new financial strategies of football, and embraces many of the values inherent in them. This confirms how a club's position and situation fundamentally mediates, informs and restricts fans' attitudes towards commercial operations, and that therefore the contempt for commercialisation seen to some extent amongst certain groups of (local?) Manchester United[179] and Liverpool fans[180] is only possible from a position of relative strength. These are games played by the fans of successful clubs. Fans at smaller clubs, or clubs in financial trouble, should theoretically be much less likely to contest commercialisation, since club survival increasingly depends on the ability to raise finance from sources other than ticket and programme revenues. United certainly fit this model, a club with long-term potential but a short-term need for an injection of funds when BIFA was formed, and financial stability and planning since to allow for serious attempts at gaining promotion: under Brealey in 1994-95 for instance, United could not raise the extremely modest fee of £120,000 for a midfielder, and at another point, could not pay the players' wages. With debts of over £10m when Brealey sold his shareholding to McDonald, the club was in serious financial trouble.

[179] King 1997a

[180] Anecdotally visible through fanzines, though of course both Liverpool and Manchester United sell huge quantities of merchandise across the country.

What is noticeable and particularly significant was the criticism BIFA levelled at Brealey for his *failure* to develop a proper commercial structure for the club, what Pinto called the 'cottage industry' standard of United's merchandising operations. Not only is the commercial logic accepted, but those who fail to create it are actively castigated: Pinto explained how, with their professional skills and background, members of the Steering Committee were actively identifying problems with the way Brealey was running United's commercial operations, and indeed suggested alternatives that would generate considerably more revenue. In this sense, BIFA was complaining about the lack of commercialisation of the club, and the failure to keep pace with other clubs, like one supporter publicly did at a Fans' Forum.[181] Another interesting pointer was a vote taken of BIFA members during the anti-Brealey campaign on whether to boycott the club shop as part of that struggle, an option that 66% rejected:[182] it is perfectly possible this was due to a desire not to damage club finances, to look long-term beyond the day when Brealey had departed. Such an agenda, while obviously mediated by the 'real world' need to balance the club's books, does also betray an acceptance by BIFA of the commercial agenda of the modern game and its chairman.

This manifests itself not just in BIFA's approach towards the commercial developments at the club under McDonald, but also in suggestions the group made independently to United regarding commercial development (discussed below). McDonald made a raft of changes, included an overhaul of the club's merchandising operations (with the shop expanded in season 1996-97, increasing turnover from £59,000 in July and August 1996 to £184,000 in July and August 1997),[183] creating a new dedicated commercial department, and starting construction of both the Abbeydale Grange training facility and the Bramall Lane Leisure Park (to feature a hotel complex, themed restaurant and pub, multiplex cinema and nursing home). Equally, the new £4m John Street stand opened late in 1996 featured 8,000 extra seats plus space for

[181] Minutes of Fans' Forum, 1996
[182] *Communiqué*, Issue 5, May 1995, page 3
[183] Report and Accounts 1997, Sheffield United plc

600 corporate clients in a new complex including 31 private boxes, two restaurant areas, bars, lounge facilities and an executive suite.[184] Most significantly, McDonald floated the club on the stock market in early 1997.

In general, there was very little opposition to these measures from BIFA: while there were some concerns about the Leisure Park, there was no fundamental opposition to the principle of diversification it embodies, nor to the club's floatation. Pinto suggests that, partly due to the speed with which it happened, floatation was accepted as central to McDonald's wider financial strategy for the club, and that the need to put United on a secure financial footing over-rode any misgivings about the plan. However, of the members surveyed here, only two supported floatation and eight were hostile (worried about the loss of control over club affairs or the potential for take-overs by asset-strippers), though a couple also expressed opposition while noting that Sheffield United had no other choice at that point in time. More importantly BIFA did not campaign against the idea, and instead by September 1997 had themselves bought 475 club shares, another 1000 shares early in 1998, and another £500 worth ten months later. There were complaints from fans about the collapse of the share price, but the cash injection the floatation put into Sheffield United was broadly speaking the main focus of attention. Equally, the problems United faced early in 1998 over the role of McDonald (culminating in his resignation from the chairmanship) did not generate a debate about the huge personal fortunes made by chairmen or the merits of floatation, but instead centred on the specific personalities involved. Indeed, when his position had still not been regularised nearly a year later (he remained chairman of the PLC and was rumoured to be on the verge of taking his place on the football board once more), BIFA agreed to issue a press release calling for him to 'sell [his shares], hopefully to somebody who has the interests of the club at heart and who is willing to invest in United'.[185] When his shareholding was finally bought late in 1998 by Italian investors, Blades Italia, BIFA's reaction was essentially non-committal, seemingly

[184] Nationwide Football League newsletter, season 1996-97, no 5, September 14, 1996
[185] Steering Committee meeting minutes, 7 October 1998, *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssabifa_sc/07_10_98.htm*

waiting to see what approach the new board would take; when that bid appeared to have been rejected by McDonald, BIFA decided to issue a leaflet at a match calling on him to sell up..

Not only did BIFA not reject or campaign against commercialisation, they positively helped with it. BIFA members were also clearly consumers of club merchandise: Pinto described the supporters still active in BIFA three years after its creation as 'mad keen' on United, such that they identified with, took pride from, and so purchased United merchandise. This view was confirmed by survey findings that 61.5% of members bought a team shirt in 1995-96 and 64% intended to do so in 1996-97,[186] while the members surveyed for this fieldwork were split 10:7 on commercialism, with the majority supporting it. Clearly there was a general acceptance even amongst those who disliked commercialism of the need to generate money, but fans were worried about the corrosive effects of the club becoming a profit maximiser: as one BIFA leading light put it 'it's the modern world! But at the moment, money and Sky rule the sport, and it's dangerous and unhealthy'. The need to place the club on a sound footing was clearly present in the minds of supporters, and this therefore is a classic case of fans accepting change (in this instance commercialisation) because it would help save the club in the short-term (and hopefully prepare it for sustainable promotion to the FAPL), and less because the fans felt it was the way football should be developing. BIFA were essentially dragged along by the context around Sheffield United, the ubiquitous need for the team to compete. Also interesting however was a comment from Pinto, who suggested that the favoured club model for BIFA was Leicester City, who combine commercial development and floatation, with community-based work and strong liaison with supporter groups (see Chapter Five).

This general agenda of the need for commercial development can be seen in some of the suggestions put to the club by BIFA and some of the ideas raised with them over the years since BIFA's formation. Pinto notes for

[186] Pinto 1996, page 3

instance how the group were concerned that both Sheffield Wednesday, and local rugby league side Sheffield Eagles, successfully operated club shops in the city centre, but Sheffield United did not. BIFA have also called for tickets to be sold in the city centre, to help improve attendances, argued for a bigger club shop, and interestingly for the creation of a proper Commercial Department at the club.[187] Another idea put forward was for a new club shop to be located at the Meadowhall centre, the biggest shopping centre in Sheffield.[188] BIFA also supported the Blades Leisure Park (due to open January 1999, featuring a hotel with a sky deck, an office block, a theme pub, a new club shop and a night-club), and attended meetings with local residents designed to allay fears about the proposed plans, [189] taking an active interest in the development and contacting the club regularly to see how it was progressing. Far from being opposed to commercial developments but unprepared to campaign against them, BIFA actively campaigned for them and undertook voluntary activities on behalf of the club to ensure their successful completion. This aligns the group closer to both dominant norms and the NFFSC than to more modern supporter groups.

BIFA members also complained about delays in the arrival of the season 1995-96 club kit, when suppliers AVEC fell nearly two months behind schedule in getting the new design out for sale: as one Steering Committee member put it 'get it sorted out, I want my stripes!',[190] while BIFA chair Paul Blomfield expressed the general anger of supporters at AVEC's incompetence in supplying the kit. BIFA also suggested that United sell merchandise through the Internet, an idea many clubs have been slow to see, an idea United picked up on in August 1997. These suggestions, particularly the last one, clearly demonstrate how the commercialisation of Sheffield United is a trend that BIFA not only do not contest, but actively encourage, and therefore that the profit maximisation project of the club and FAPL culture is not being resisted.

[187] Consultative Committee meeting, July 1996
[188] Consultative Committee meeting, December 1996
[189] Consultative Committee meeting, January 1997

Pinto indeed notes that most BIFA members were actively pleased that the merchandising operations of the club was much better run under McDonald, and that progress had been made on one of the most obvious failings of the old regime. At no time did BIFA express any sustained objections to the commercial developments United were engaged in, and the sense that the wider financial needs of the club had to take priority over any such objections was strong: resistance to the FAPL-style commercial project overall was thus absent. The usual caveats apply of course, with the general two-year duration for any kit as applicable at Bramall Lane as anywhere else, and the notion of a new kit every year or a third away kit unacceptable: this would be viewed by BIFA as exploitative and unnecessary; but the *principle* of the operations was not questioned, and as suggested previously, it is maybe outside the cultural logic of clubs struggling with financial problems to generate such 'fundamentalist' complaints. To that extent, BIFA neither resist nor contest the focus on commercialisation, mainly, it seems, as a result of the dire financial situation that United found themselves in.

There are, however, factors that mediate BIFA's approach to commercialisation and merchandise, notably the extent of consultation by the club, and the extent to which kit or merchandise designs break particular club traditions. While such traditions are clearly 'invented' (in the sense that no club has ever retained the same colours or design throughout its history), each generation of fans can be said to pick up a colour and/or design that becomes traditional to *them*, in this case, red and white stripes, based on levels of success in it, the players who wore it, the famous occasions it is connected to etc. Pinto suggests that the preservation of the stripes is the key factor for BIFA members (unlike, for instance, a 1995-96 home kit that sported a diamond pattern), and the sort of restrictions this and the rejection of any third kit places on clubs represent a fundamental break with the FAPL model of kit as leisure-wear, detached from any social context of the club's history or traditions, success or supporters. This view of the kit is of a social and historical tradition and a specific identity, and not a commercial

[190] *Red & White Wizaaard* Issue 3; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue3/kickoff.htm*

commodity nor a marketing opportunity. To this extent, it rejects the fundamentals of the principle *per se*, by denying the club the freedom to redefine the colours and kit as they wish which, in commercial discourses, is their right, but it does not genuinely contest it in practice, partly since the scope for redesigning merchandise within the limitations set by supporters remains significant.

More importantly, the vote McDonald offered fans on the design of the new kit in 1995-96, and the fact that BIFA clearly saw a role for itself and other supporters in such processes of consultation and invests them with some importance,[191] to some extent legitimated the process. Pinto suggests that attitudes amongst fans towards the kit were undoubtedly changed by their involvement in the decision-making process: this is of course not genuine fan power, since the option 'keep the same kit' was not available, and it was purely a question of which new design would be introduced. There have also been warnings from BIFA that United should not assume that consultation confers the right to bring out a new design each year, that fans were concerned over the pace of change with regard to kits,[192] and that they should not be exploited (the classic FSA/fanzine construction), but overall the notion of fans having a direct input into the process, while limited and restricted, remains an advance on the operations of most clubs, and to that extent, helps the club to introduce new merchandise and kit designs more easily.

Within the context of the financial dealings of Sheffield United the issue of genuine diversification arises, however, not just in the sense of revenue raised from non-ticket operations, but from non-football operations, notably the Blades Leisure Park. McDonald clearly had this in mind when he took over the club, and commented that 'We are not solely football - we have also got a leisure business, which gives us some defence against the ups and

[191] Steering Committee meeting minutes, November 1997, December 1997 and 31 March 1998, and minutes of Fans Forum, January 1996, Consultative Committee, August 1997; Consultative committee meeting minutes, November 1997

[192] Consultative Committee meeting minutes, November 1997; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue10/consult.htm*

downs of football.'[193] Pinto reported worries within the Steering Committee that United would be generating more revenue from non-footballing activities than from ticket sales themselves, and whether the various facilities at the Leisure Park would be operated to the benefit of the team, or individuals at the club, or the PLC. Pinto notes that the opinion within the Steering Committee on the subject of the Leisure Park split between those who felt that such diversification takes the club beyond its legitimate realm of operations, and the more 'pragmatic' element who argue (as he put it) that 'we shouldn't really complain because there has never been a vision for this club'.

Crowd Demography

Within the general context of the crowd demography, some interesting attitudes were uncovered. The prevailing mood was to accept much of the changing match-day demography, but there were worries about rising prices, and the absence of younger generations of Blades inside Bramall Lane: however, this did not translate into actual opposition to the presence of new types of supporters at matches.

There was overwhelming support amongst this sample of Blades (fifteen out of seventeen) for the view that the FAPL is an attempt to make football a middle-class sport, but equally there was no opposition expressed to the presence of families or middle class fans at football and no reason to believe that BIFA felt that the appeal to such elements was wrong. Indeed, seven of the seventeen positively welcomed the presence of families and elements of football's changed atmosphere, and supported the appeal to families: one noted how this was traditional at Bramall Lane anyway (discussed below). Hence, the perspective on demography was very inclusive, and accepted elements of the FAPL redefinition of fandom. There was however opposition to the exclusionary effects on 'ordinary' fans, the 'fan on the street' as one respondent put it, but the identity of members and BIFA generally was based solely around their status as committed and concerned Blades, that is,

[193] *Electronic Telegraph*, 15 January 1997, 'Saints cheer on football's crowded day': *http://telegraph.co.uk*

around fandom and loyalty, not any class culture or sub-culture (conscious or otherwise), despite the clear links between the two. There were occasional calls for the interests of the active supporter to be fore-grounded over those of TV viewers, but generally the attitude towards the crowd was entirely inclusive and non-hostile.

Pinto made an important distinction, noted above, which presumably affects these views and BIFA attitudes: the concept of 'family' football at Bramall Lane carries different connotations from other grounds, and from dominant norms, where it celebrates the middle-class nuclear family out for a detached day's 'entertainment'. Pinto notes a characteristic deep in South Yorkshire life drawn from mining community values, in which the family was a social formation in which working class leisure would be located, such that attendance at football had long been a family affair anyway, and 'fathers, brothers, sons and daughters tend to go to matches' together: family fandom at United was not therefore about the unaffective whiling away of an afternoon at the sanitised dispassionate football (what Pinto calls the 'razzmatazz, sumo, cheerleaders' approach, that BIFA would reject), but is centred on the football itself, simply placed within the context of the family. One Steering Committee member also noted that 'the family section has always existed in the traditional sections of the ground, and there used to be a children's 'pen' on the Kop', while a female writer in *Red and White Wizaaard* noted how all her family going back to the start of the century, including her 90 year old mother, were active supporters,[194] suggesting that the overt shift towards family football of the FAPL faces a fundamentally different context at Bramall Lane than at other clubs without such histories. This highlights regional contexts and differences in fandom and supporter traditions that maybe have been ignored for too long in favour of more general discourses assumed to be present in all contexts. There are thus divisions within the catch-all concept of 'family' that interrogate and inform conceptions of entertainment, the motives for attending football and the nature of that fandom in different ways, and United seems to have a long

[194] *Red & White Wizaaard* Issue 1; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue1/whybifa.htm*

tradition of families attending together in ways that do not necessarily lead to the sanitisation of other aspects of the sport.

This history is reflected in the approach of BIFA to families: over the years, BIFA have made a series of recommendations and suggestions for change to the board that clearly support the concept of family football (discussed below), and some of their own activities as a group reveal the same agenda and the same approach. This is maybe inevitable given that BIFA reportedly has a significant proportion of families and middle-class supporters anyway, and so the exclusionary, or more accurately, non-welcoming, approach that can be expected of traditionality was *de facto* absent. Pinto also suggests that from campaigns conducted by BIFA outside the ground on match-day, he got the definite impression that many Blades still attend in families, both in the traditional father and son model, but also mothers and daughters.

Furthermore, BIFA's Objectives forbid discrimination of any sort ('to increase the level of support for Sheffield United FC from all sections of the community, regardless of race, sex etc'),[195] and in this case, the concept of discrimination is taken to its logical conclusion, whereby *all* supporters are welcome at the club and the ground. Equally, since BIFA started from the premise that the club needed financial security and stability, and hence increased attendances, to introduce policies that would actively discourage potential spectators from going to Bramall Lane would be counter-productive and contradictory, since it would have clear consequences on the club and its finances that BIFA was created to help avoid. United's attendances had declined from around 19,000 in the FAPL in 1993-94 to 13-14,000 in the First Division (BIFA knew that United needed crowds of 15,000 to break even), so the group could not logically discriminate against *anyone* prepared to pay to watch the team. The financial imperatives of the club combined with the demographic profile of BIFA activists to mitigate against campaigning for exclusion on any demographic or fandom grounds. Pinto sums up the dominant view as 'one person's money is as good as any other, wherever

[195] Objective 4 of BIFA, as laid down in the rules of the Association

they are from... I think in any organisation like this, you're not particularly bothered about the criteria... what someone should have to actually join the organisation'. BIFA are thus hemmed in by a range of factors, the need to maximise the crowd at Bramall Lane, the history of the working-class culture of family football in South Yorkshire, and its own demographic make-up and constitution.

Such circumstances do not however explain the *pro-actively* positive approach BIFA take towards families: they explain the absence of a negative or hostile agenda, but BIFA go beyond that and actively encourage families to attend games and join the organisation. In this context, BIFA have recommended offering cheap seats to children,[196] the creation of a national junior pricing policy for home and away games across the country (to the Football Taskforce), and most strikingly, the creation of a crèche at the ground. At the 1996 Fans' Forum, a question to the chairman was minuted as 'we are supposed to be a family club, so why isn't there a crèche?'.[197] Significantly, the group persistently asked United for updates on its construction: Steering Committee meeting minutes note on a number of occasions BIFA's frustration that the crèche was proving slow to materialise.[198] It is all but impossible to envisage traditional football culture supporting the notion of a crèche (particularly not at the stadium itself), or considering it a valid project for a football club, although FSA culture would view it as a necessary and positive development.

Such an agenda, while it lacks the forced agenda of the FAPL appeal to families, the commercialism that seems inevitably to follow it, and does not correspond to the exclusionary framework that this appeal operates within, does at least concur with the need to attract families to matches, and to that extent complies with modern norms. However, since the culture of such family attendance is centred around support for Sheffield United rather than other elements around it, and BIFA policies on families are essentially

[196] Steering Committee meeting minutes, 4 December 1996
[197] Minutes of Fans Forum, January 1996
[198] Steering Committee meeting minutes, July 1996, March, August and November 1997

peripheral to other supporters' match-day experiences (in that they do not directly impinge on such fans or their ability to participate), BIFA's agenda is fundamentally different in motivation and effect. Since it lacks the FAPL's commercial edge (where it is hoped that such spectators will spend considerable amounts on merchandise, particularly for the children) or its political agenda (replacing those supporters who want to sing and participate and who might noisily campaign against the board, with pacified fans who attend in safe social formations), it represents a different approach to the issue. When combined with BIFA's approach on prices and terraces, there are clear differences between the BIFA attitude on the crowd and the exclusionary approach of the FAPL, even if such an agenda obviously does not contribute much to traditionality or traditional modes of fandom.

A further reason not to pursue an exclusionary agenda is simply that a fan group like BIFA is entirely dependent on its membership, in terms of finance, active participation, and its perceived right (with the media, club and other fans) to influence events. To that extent, BIFA would be damaging their own ability to generate interest and activism, and of course therefore raise funds, if they advocated exclusionist policies towards the crowd. As Pinto put it, 'we couldn't afford to be only for certain classes of support': hence BIFA deliberately organised their campaigns so that all the four corners of Bramall Lane, and so all the different types of spectator inside the ground were reached: additionally, the group offers family membership, where additional family members join for £1 instead of the £3 individual charge, and organised executive coaches to all away games for the 1996-97 season. Designated '*t*he Family Bus', it was created with the conscious aim of 'attract[ing] families back to football',[199] and offered refreshments and toilets, showed football videos and included a stop suitable for youngsters on each trip, and was deliberately priced to attract children and OAPs. It failed as an idea (despite making a profit of around £60) since as both Pinto and the Steering Committee noted, attracting interest was hard as too many Blades use private cars to get to matches, and the coach was discontinued in November

[199] Steering Committee meeting minutes, 9 July 1996

1996 except for certain games. But the principle, of seeking to attract families to football, clearly stands.

As suggested above however, a further distinction between BIFA's family ideology and that of the FAPL is BIFA's concern with ticket prices and social exclusion. Pinto suggests that many younger people are increasingly excluded due to the way tickets are sold for United, and because of the prices (especially for the less well-off supporters found in the Kop). While the main visible problem for BIFA members is with United's large dispersed support, who struggle to get to games due to timetabling, there have been a number of calls from BIFA members for prices to be kept as cheap as possible so as not to exclude those on lower incomes,[200] while BIFA has suggested tailoring ticket pricing schemes to the needs of 16-18 year olds, students, children and the unemployed (particularly for those fixtures not expected to sell out),[201] as well as creating a £64 student 'season ticket' to cover term time matches.[202] Another idea was to make entry to reserve games free or just £1 in order to get younger fans into habits of active support,[203] which as one member of the Steering Committee put it, would mean that 'the whole family of Sheffield United can be together'.[204] This inclusive and concerned approach is further clearly highlighted by the idea of a national pricing policy (including standard concessions), discounts on merchandise, reduced price tickets for Coca-Cola games and 'bring a friend' schemes for season ticket holders.[205] BIFA has also suggested timetabling games on Saturdays to ensure continuity of support: there is thus a strong interest in prices and ticket systems, and the general area of the crowd, and BIFA members regularly talk of the need not to alienate or exclude the 'average' or 'working class' fan. The questionnaire BIFA conducted on terracing (discussed below) found some support for the notion on the grounds that it would encourage diversification within the crowd.

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200 *Red & White Wizaaard* Issue 2; http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue2/access.htm
201 Steering Committee meeting minutes, 4 December 1996
202 Steering Committee meeting minutes, October 1997
203 Steering Committee meeting minutes, 31 March 1998
204 *Red & White Wizaaard* Issue 2; http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue2/sharehol.htm
205 Steering Committee meeting minutes, March 1997, and Consultative Committee, August 1997

Distinct within the general inclusiveness of BIFA, however, is the issue of corporate hospitality. While BIFA do not actively campaign against anyone, the approach to corporate hospitality is markedly different from that on other changes to football's demography. Additional corporate facilities were opened in 1996 in the new John Street Stand, which included 31 executive boxes (each costing between £9,000 and £16,000).[206] Pinto does note that while corporate hospitality is not popular with BIFA, the money it generates cannot be discounted, and hence is tolerated: 'we can't really dismiss it if someone is paying £1000 for a box [as] obviously £1000 is being brought in'. Concerns were expressed by BIFA members about the paucity of facilities for ordinary fans relative to the comforts enjoyed by corporate spectators, but this specifically contextualised unease does not amount to a total rejection. While United's financial needs require accommodation with corporate hospitality in the eyes of BIFA, the group however clearly do not view this section of the modern crowd with the same fervour afforded to family supporters, clearly rejecting the modern theorisation of corporate hospitality as a valid a contributor to modern football just like any other part of the crowd: BIFA's dichotomised approach, with families and lower income groups on the one hand, and corporate hospitality on the other, suggests a specific and non-dominant conceptualisation of the fan and what values fans have to exhibit to qualify (personal passion, or interest). Essentially where FAPL norms positively seek to attract corporate hospitality, BIFA tolerate it for the finance it brings into the club.

It would however be interesting to see what attitude BIFA would take were corporate hospitality to impinge on ordinary spectators: this indeed was the only instance when BIFA raised the issue, when supporters in the John Street Stand were moved in 1996 to make way for sponsors. BIFA's objections were couched in terms of the failure to warn fans in advance rather than the principle *per se*, and the issue is essentially submerged within BIFA's work: two of the seventeen members expressed some opposition to

[206] Armstrong 1998

corporate hospitality, but there was clearly no groundswell of opinion against them. As Pinto points out, basically there were simply more immediate and important issues for BIFA and its members to address, particularly if their presence or actions do not in any way impinge on ordinary fans.

Many of these suggestions do not tie BIFA into traditionality of course: traditional discourses would in no sense urge the creation of preferentially-priced season tickets for students, nor offer free or cheap tickets (as in the 'Bring a friend' scheme), but this long-term focus on prices and exclusion equally goes very much against the grain of the FAPL, where exclusion is not a concern. Such an approach mediates the impact of support for families and other fans within the new demography, in essentially seeking to ensure access for all, and not therefore access for new fans at the *expense* of others.

Gender

Gender as an issue was essentially absent or submerged within BIFA: while women contribute to the Steering Committee (two of the seventeen on it were women in 1997-98), and feature amongst BIFA's central or influential positions (including two of the six regular BIFA representatives on the Consultative Committee, the Treasurer, one of the BIFA representatives to the Task Force, the BIFA Secretary up until October 1998, and the subsequent Secretary), the issue of female *supporters* was not raised once at either the Steering Committee, Fans' Forums or Consultative Committees. One of the very few articles in BIFA's fanzine that addressed the issue made the interesting suggestion that the mini-skirted cheerleaders common in modern football are in themselves sexist, and counter to attempts to remove discrimination against women,[207] but generally the issue was absent from BIFA's campaigning and agenda. This can be seen as the product of Sheffield United's history of mixed and diverse demographics, that the crowd at Bramall Lane over the years has always had a strong female element to it, and hence there was no need to identify this as a specific issue. The only

[207] *Red & White Wizaaard* Issue 5; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue5/women.htm*

occasion when the issue of gender can be seen, even tangentially, within the work of BIFA was over the question of building a crèche at Bramall Lane, but even this can be located with family football discourses, rather than purely an issue of women supporters' needs. While the absence of women in BIFA's work fits traditionality in this context, the sexism exemplified by the latter in the past is also absent, and hence while BIFA is clearly a male space, it is clearly not a masculinist space in the traditionally understood sense within football (as the issue of the crèche demonstrates), even though there is equally no sense in which a positive agenda could be identified.

Terracing

On the issues of unreserved seating and terracing, clear resistance and appeals to traditional values were however visible within the work of BIFA. The notion of introducing unreserved seating for different parts of Bramall Lane was raised at fully six different meetings from January 1997 onwards (including the AGM and the submission to the Taskforce), with the dual objectives of recreating the atmosphere lost since the switch to all-seater (by allowing singing and younger fans to sit together), and also of swelling match-day attendance with more casual spectators, who often cannot get seats together or with friends who already attend regularly, and hence may not attend at all. United ultimately accepted the idea, allowing unreserved seating in the Bramall Lane upper tier in August 1997. There was thus a mix of interests: the notions that atmosphere is an important part of the match-day experience and will be generated by fans (if they are allowed) to are essentially traditional attitudes that the FAPL seek to deny or control, while the interests of the casual spectator (who selects which games to see) would appear to be outside the normal boundaries of traditionality, with its focus on loyalty (within the boundaries set by prices etc). However the fact that prices are rising means that maybe the casual spectators include increasing numbers of traditional supporters in any case, and there is no particular dichotomy between these positions.

Importantly, however, BIFA have never suggested any of the centralised, club-controlled FAPL methods for transforming the Bramall Lane

atmosphere. The centralised prevention of independent expression amongst fans, through a variety of techniques, is a crucial way in which the FAPL has redefined fandom and the match-day experience, and McDonald floated some of these strategies at a 1997 Fans' Forum.[208] He announced the arrival at Bramall Lane of 'Captain Blade' a mascot dressed as a pirate, plus another mascot dressed as a wizard: other suggestions made at the meeting included using the tannoy and electronic scoreboard to whip up an atmosphere, along with cheer-leaders. It is unclear whether it was BIFA members or members of the official Supporters Club who made these suggestions (since the meeting was open), but since such proposals are completely absent from all other BIFA documents and minutes of meetings, and did not form part of BIFA's submissions to United or the Taskforce, it is fair to assume there is no groundswell of support for them within BIFA. Chair Paul Blomfield did once suggest working in tandem with the club to generate the atmosphere, but this was much more along the Italian lines of fan-generated atmosphere than support for the club controlling or allowing expression.[209] Indeed, minutes from a Steering Committee meeting highlights the lack of support for controlled match-day experiences, noting that BIFA 'definitely don't want a band', and opting instead for unreserved seating and letting children in for free.[210]

In BIFA's view, the best way to generate match-day atmosphere is via terracing or standing areas, an issue the group has raised regularly with United. On five separate occasions, BIFA raised the possibility of bringing back terraces to Bramall Lane with the club, and again to the Taskforce when it visited Sheffield in March 1998, describing it as 'obviously one of the most important issues to fans... [that] should be discussed by the Task Force, the FA and the Government'.[211] Members were balloted on the issue ahead of the arrival of the Taskforce: 51 of the 72 respondents in favour of allowing terraces inside the ground, 51 of the 58 who then preferred to sit were still

[208] Fans' Forum meeting minutes, January 1997
[209] *Red & White Wizaaard* Issue 5; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue5/viewfrom.htm*
[210] Steering Committee meeting minutes, January 1999
[211] Steering Committee meeting minutes, 4 February 1998

prepared to see the return of standing areas in parts of Bramall Lane,[212] and all the activists surveyed for this fieldwork were also in favour. A BIFA Steering Committee member summed up the prevailing mood as 'most people would welcome the return of terracing, mainly because of the atmosphere'.[213] On a practical level, BIFA made contact with other supporter groups interested in bringing back terracing or retaining it, in England (as co-ordinated by the FSA) and in Europe (the Eurostand 98 campaign), and suggested in 1997 that the redevelopment of parts of Bramall Lane be made with one eye on the possibility of a return to terraces, such that the new seats could be easily removed if the law changed to permit the return of terraces.

This repeated focus on terraces highlights a strong commitment to some essentially traditional notions of the centrality of the match-day experience to fandom, and how the former can be enhanced by participatory and ecstatic discourses that terraces can afford space to. An article in *TRAWW* noted how 'the majority of football fans appreciate just how much the atmosphere at football grounds has changed (for the worse in my opinion) over the last few years and the fact that we now have bands, dancing girls and mascots "trying" to entertain us proves that. In fact many clubs, the Blades included, are now asking "how do we improve the atmosphere at the match?'[214] Such a position reinforces traditional discourses, values and forms of expression, and resists in fundamental ways the normative project of the FAPL.

Anti-racism

A central issue for fanzine and FSA culture from the late 1980s onwards, anti-racism is a subject that neither traditionality and new spectatorism can easily accommodate, though obviously for different reasons. As suggested previously, BIFA take a strong practical interest in anti-racism at Sheffield United, and so fit neither model of fandom. The group helped research attitudes amongst local minority communities towards Sheffield United and

[212] Results of BIFA terraces questionnaire; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue12/results.htm*
[213] Introduction to BIFA terraces questionnaire; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue12/terraces.htm*
[214] *Red & White Wizaaard* Issue 9; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue9/counted.htm*

their experiences of racism,[215] and apply the lessons from that research to Bramall Lane, as well as trying to actively interest local Asian women in football. They have also complained about Blades who racially abuse opposition players, and pro-actively raised the issue with the club, and when they felt that United was less than enthusiastic about dealing with it, pushed them to ban offenders from Bramall Lane: BIFA also asked for stewards to take a much firmer line with fans shouting racist abuse and suggested the creation of a hotline for fans to report those involved. Much of this seems based around the work of a key individual within BIFA, Howard Holmes, who has a long personal involvement in anti-racism, however,[216] and in Pinto's research, anti-racism was not deemed one of BIFA's 'great success' by any respondent.[217] Of the sample of members surveyed for this fieldwork, equally, only two felt that anti-racism should be a campaign priority for BIFA. Nonetheless, Holmes and Blomfield clearly pushed BIFA in this direction, which also included arranging for the club to host anti-racist plays, and actively taking the research conclusions noted above to the Football Taskforce. A member of BIFA represented the group on the FURD research team, producing a street football game that the BIFA Steering Committee hoped would 'bring young people in mixed communities together through football'.[218] Such a socially aware and committed agenda fits FSA discourses, and highlights a genuine commitment to the issue despite the lack of any minority members within BIFA, but which in no way fits either the glamorous de-politicised FAPL, or traditionality with both its de-politicised focus, and ambiguous and hostile attitude towards race. The sense of genuine engagement with the community that such anti-racist work involves (in the sense of not simply dealing with racist abuse inside the ground, but actively seeking to genuinely connect the club to local minority populations) fits neither the extremely limited involvement that most FAPL clubs have with

[215] The 'Football Unites, Racism Divides' (FURD) project
[216] Fully 25% of BIFA members in Pinto's survey had previous pressure group experience in anti-racist work. Pinto 1996, page 2
[217] Pinto 1996, pages 4 and 5
[218] Steering Committee meeting minutes, Sept 1998; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/bifa_sc/02_09_98.htm*

their local communities, nor their de-politicised and disengaged approach towards a whole range of contentious 'political' issues.[219]

Cross-club or National Issues

The campaign on terraces noted above involved contact with other supporter groups, and this is an interesting area that highlights differences between BIFA and the FSA: the FSA's national or cross-club agenda is widely believed to have contributed to its decline,[220] and particularly alienated traditional supporters, whose focus and interest were directed purely on their own club. To this extent, in seeking to locate BIFA within wider fan group traditions, it is important to consider BIFA's approach towards issues at other clubs. From the evidence available, there is a measure of interest in such matters: members actively participated in the cross-club fan campaigns at Brighton (1997) and Doncaster (1998), established links with Norwich City ISA, renewed its institutional membership of the FSA and was represented at its annual conferences, contributed to the Hillsborough disaster campaign, and pro-terracing campaigns, plus active participation in the creation and sustaining of the cross-club ISA Network. There were also suggestions during discussions over what to include on its Taskforce submission that BIFA raise the financial problems of lower division clubs, revealing an interest in other clubs and divisions outside traditionality, yet crucially also outside the FAPL's individuated club-based paradigms, as represented by moves towards a European SuperLeague, single-club PPV deals, growth of nursery clubs and other arrangements between clubs, and general disinterest in the lower divisions (the view that they constitute a 'problem', were a drain on resources in the collectivised past, and now have to look after themselves).

To this extent, BIFA fits neither model, and instead share the FSA (and often fanzine) theorisation of fans as essentially the same regardless of the club supported. BIFA's politicised approach to many of these national or cross-club issues is ultimately a more significant rejection of the de-politicised

[219] See for instance *The Times*, 7 November 1998, Sports section, page 1, on the FA banning of the display of 'political' messages by players on the pitch.
[220] Nash 1998

FAPL than it is of traditionality, since to recognise the collectivity of all professional League clubs as significant and something that should interest all fans is to fundamentally deny the central de-collectivised agenda of the FAPL, and many of the approaches such an agenda takes towards various issues (PPV deals, nursery clubs, the structure and existence of the Worthington Cup etc). Since the aim of the FAPL was to detach top division clubs from the 'dead-weight' of the Football League, for fans to actively consider and address the problems of clubs in lower divisions (particularly financial problems) is to step beyond the world of the FAPL, and ultimately, if looked at logically, reject its processes and agenda altogether. Such a move can potentially lead to a contestation of the whole de-collectivised ethos of the FAPL, and hence support for more equal, even cross-subsidised, divisions of the massive revenues pouring into the top division. In this sense, BIFA's collective approach (however it is generated) is more a threat to the dominant culture of the day than to traditionality, which would consider it politicised and irrelevant to the real issues, and so therefore not a problem in either sense.

What is however potentially significant is the timing of interest in such issues: BIFA may take an interest in other clubs, but it does not *a priori* seek to campaign on them, and it is noticeable that all the external issues addressed by BIFA arose at times when events at Bramall Lane were relatively stable. BIFA newsletters for the volatile anti-Brealey period of 1994-1995 do not note a single non-Sheffield United issue (apart from BIFA's involvement in hosting the first ISA network conference), and instead all the different ways in which BIFA have addressed issues at other clubs have come when the club has been relatively calm, and the direction it was going in clear. Only two of the seventeen BIFA members had ever joined the FSA, and half of those who had never been members found BIFA's focus on Sheffield United attractive by comparison. It is possible, and indeed likely, that there is an inverse correlation between the interest taken in other clubs' problems and the problems at Sheffield United, and that for ISA members, an interest in the collectivity of football only flourishes when the situation at their own club is calm and the issues that genuinely exercise the members' interest, United

issues, are not pressing. This may sound obvious given the local focus of the ISA, but it is significant once more within the wider terms of the history of fan groups, in highlighting how FSA values and discourses are mediated, and how the organisation was very much the product of exceptional circumstances. Without the FSA's *a priori* collective ethos, interest in external or national matters amongst BIFA members arises when the situation is either genuinely desperate, or directly affects United. Until that stage, BIFA focus on United. Pinto suggests this attitude manifests itself in the group's approach to issues like Sky: the fact that United had been relegated and hence were not covered by Sky meant that Sky's undoubtedly deleterious impact on the game as a whole was not an active issue for BIFA. It was not until Sky bought the right to the First Division in 1996, and so re-arranged many United fixtures, that it became an issue. Pinto recalls that motivating Blades to take an interest in the FSA foundered on the latter's non-concentration on Sheffield United: 'I've given [members] the FSA magazine, and they've said 'is there any Blades in here?'. BIFA thus does take an interest in external or cross-club matters, and so contests the FAPL emphasis on the top division existing in a vacuum, but only when things at Bramall Lane are settled, or when the other issues are so pressing (like Brighton) or directly affect United.

The Fan as Consumer

There was also a range of issues raised by BIFA that fit what has been called the 'Watchdog approach', dealing with questions of the consumption of football. These include the state of the toilets, entry methods for season ticket holders, the right to the best seat if first in the queue for tickets, arrangements for sale of cup semi-final tickets, requests for seating plans of away grounds to be made available, and the late postponement of fixtures, and suggesting that the club carry out market research of lapsed season ticket holders to see 'what could be done to attract them back' to Bramall Lane.[221] Such an agenda does not fit either dichotomised school of fandom, nor involve any great issues of principle, but addresses the ways commercial

[221] Steering Committee minutes, 4 December 1996

operations function and are administered. Conceptually, this fits better the FAPL model of fans as consumers, of seeking to improve the 'service' to supporters, particularly the notion of BIFA carrying out a comprehensive Fans' Survey (to include questions about club merchandise).[222] But since these issues are basically peripheral and *ad hoc*, they are not central to BIFA's activities, certainly not by comparison with issues like prices, merchandise and the right to consultation. To some extent, the attempts to improve the 'service' to fans do bolster FAPL conceptions of fandom of course, but whether they legitimate FAPL culture in general is more open to doubt, since they are essentially minimal issues.

Contestation

The general picture is necessarily confused and unclear, since obviously BIFA do not fit neatly or comfortably into traditionality or new spectatorism. However, it is possible to show that BIFA do not generally contest the fundamental principles of the modern game: on the crucial issue of financial diversification and transformation, BIFA not only accept the FAPL agenda, but in some respects positively welcome it and push it forward, and thus do not represent traditionality or traditional working class interests. However, on football's changing demography, BIFA's inclusive approach does lead them to defend those priced out of the game, which, when linked with their concerns over terraces and atmosphere (the general focus on *jouissance*), pulls the group much more into traditionality and a defence of working class interests. Equally, since their focus on family football draws upon values separate from the FAPL's conception, BIFA do not share some dominant conceptualisations of the modern crowd, even if they do not actively contest them.

But, in general, the need for Sheffield United to compete effectively in the ever-more desperate scramble to get out of the First Division, and the history of Brealey's chairmanship, appear to combine to create a very accommodating and inclusive approach to football's cultural transformation:

[222] Consultative Committee meeting minutes, November 1997; *http://pine.shu.ac.uk/~cmssa/traww/issue10/consult.htm*

asked what means were valid in the club's quest for success, one of the founders of BIFA replied 'my team has not won anything for 72 years. What do you think?!', an attitude that, in many ways, sums up BIFA's approach to the modern game. Equally, the type of United fan who is attracted to BIFA, and who takes an active interest in its work, pull the group in certain directions, suggesting little scope in which BIFA can be seen as a working class response to the transformation of football, even if there are senses in which it defends working class interests. These diverse factors mean that while BIFA does contest significant parts of the FAPL project, overall its strategies are accepted, even if BIFA's attempts to intercede in the management process do reject FAPL conceptions of power, and the legitimate role of fans within that.

In terms of the contradictions in fan culture and resistance that King identifies,[223] BIFA seek to marry the need for financial stability and commercial exploitation with a sense of social awareness regarding the crowd (over ticket prices and systems, for instance), and hence implicitly operate from the viewpoint that commercial exploitation (however it is limited by traditional concerns of design and price) need not create exclusion or sub-ordination, if it is treated as a way of raising revenue for the club, and does not become a tool for allocating tickets. These processes are thus detached from each other, allowing BIFA to defend both the financial stability of the club in an increasingly difficult modern context, and also the interests of working class fans whose fandom does not include commercialism, and whose ecstatic fandom is increasingly outside dominant norms.

[223] King 1997a

Chapter Four - Southampton and SISA

Southampton FC (SFC) is one of the great survivors of English football: rarely able to spend much money on players or wages, and increasingly restricted by the falling maximum capacity at The Dell, they have nonetheless maintained their place in the top division for twenty successive years, a record bettered only by a few, usually larger, and wealthier clubs. The Dell never had a very large capacity, but by the early 1990s, it was down to 21,000, and by 1994, 15,000, as a result of the Taylor Report, which is clearly not economic in the context of the top division's spiralling wages and transfers. In 1998, the club's total turnover was just £7m, and SFC made an operating loss that year of over £3.5m.[224] The club was run by the old-school small businessmen Guy Askham, and ex-FA chairman, lawyer Keith Wiseman, until December 1996, when Southampton staged a reverse take-over of the obscure City investment firm Secure Retirement PLC, and floated on the stock market for a fraction of the value expected (£7.9m instead of the £30m suggested by property analysts).[225] This led to the creation of a new company, Southampton Leisure Holdings Plc, and the establishment of a new Board of Directors. In June 1997, Rupert Lowe, chairman of Secure Retirement, became chairman of the football club (although his share-holding was actually small).

Southampton Independent Supporters Association (SISA)

Just like BIFA, SISA's roots lie much more clearly in traditional motivations for fan activism than any 1990s-rooted response to transformation, and only later developed a politicised agenda that sought to drive SFC in particular directions.[226] The main catalyst at the start was the team manager, Ian Branfoot, and the style of football his side were playing. SISA was formed in

[224] Southampton Leisure Holdings PLC, half-yearly interim results to 30 November 1998, released 22 January 1999: reproduced at: *http://www.saintsfc.co.uk/6mnthreport.htm*

[225] *Goal* magazine, December 1997

[226] The fieldwork for this chapter was attendance at a SISA meeting in June 1997, and an interview with SISA leader Perry McMillan in August and September 1997. Documents were collected from SISA archives, and from issues of *The Ugly Inside* fanzine between 1996 and 1998. All but five of the questionnaires were collected in late 1997 and early 1998, with the others collected at the meeting in June 1997. As suggested in Chapter Two, however, this approach does not affect the nature of responses in significant ways.

September 1993, with McMillan suggesting that the team's poor performances, unattractive non-Saints like style of play and the manager's attitude towards supporters coalesced to radicalise fans. Of the 25 members surveyed here, nearly half mentioned Branfoot as the reason for joining SISA, four noted the general malaise of the club, and another five wanted to achieve some form of fan representation within it.

To this extent, SISA shares the same origins as other fan groups, that the radicalisation of fans draws its main impetus from essentially football issues, and not cultural or political agenda. However, McMillan also suggests that the lack of communication between fans and the Board was part of a wider problem at Southampton, as confirmed by the twelve members here who identified some form of long-term problem of representation as their reason for joining. Interestingly, in contextualising the creation of SISA, McMillan reports that attempts had been made in 1991 to form an ISA, with expertise sought from the Tottenham Independent Supporters Association, but since the team was not performing as badly at that time, there was not the anger and activism needed to get the organisation off the ground. To this extent, cultural change can be eliminated as an explanatory factor, at least at the point of the group's creation, and SISA's existence owes much more to standard fan motivations.

But as with other groups, the initial football-based impetus, if sustained, can be transformed into much more significant and long-term objectives that strike at the heart of some central FAPL values, and in fundamental ways, seek to reconstruct the club and its relations with fans. As with BIFA, SISA over the years actively sought to penetrate the club's decision-making processes, operating within discourses that claim that fans have the right to consultation and participation, a view of the club that totally rejects and contests the FAPL construction of it as a private organisation that discloses information when it chooses to (or is forced to do by stock market regulations). One SISA article concludes with the statement, "SISA is not an old-fashioned fan club.... it exists to champion supporters' rights and has

retained its independence on that single principle",[227] which manifests itself in requests for the club manager, and more importantly, the chairman to make themselves available to fans to answer questions. But generally SISA have gone further than BIFA, and on a number of instances have acted *in lieu* of the club altogether: this includes representing SFC at planning committee meetings at county and city council levels (meetings where the club was officially not represented at all), directly lobbying with councillors, and even researching and identifying potential alternative sites for the new stadium in 1998 once the Stoneham project appeared doomed to fail. That is to say, SISA, far from sitting outside the decision-making process or interjecting on as certain issues arose, is actively involved in issues of the first magnitude, and liase with authorities and agencies who would normally expect to deal with the club itself. It is an incredible situation where fan groups are identifying sites for a new ground for a FAPL club, and trying to organise the necessary funding, rather than waiting for the club to take the initiative.

The Demography of SISA

SISA has not surveyed its members, unlike BIFA, so the conclusions presented here are necessarily sketchy. The meeting attended was a crisis meeting, so the numbers present were maybe not representative of the wider history of SISA: there were well over 700 members attending, about 85% of whom were male and almost exclusively white. The age range was from early teenagers to supporters of fifty years standing, with some bias towards the 30s age range. Though it is impossible to say who attends 'normal' meetings of the group (there do not appear to be many of these) this profile is pretty much as it is in other fan groups. Just as BIFA found it hard to attract younger members to meetings, so SISA's constituency was generally weighted away from the teenage element, highlighting both how fan groups can rarely hope to represent everyone, and how younger fans will find it hard to connect with the ethos and objectives of a group like SISA.

[227] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 50, page 11

Equally, there seemed to be a relatively wide class base, obviously traditional elements, businessmen, and other professional groups (this view is based on indicators such as modes of address, codes of discourse and approach towards the debate, plus the fact that some of the members declared their status and potential role before making their contributions). The top echelon of SISA represents skilled or semi-skilled labour, with a taxi driver and a union representative (who later also became a taxi driver) primarily responsible for running the group. SISA leadership identify themselves and the organisation as working class: in a critique, the Directors of the club are characterised as upper class financial swindlers, while the SISA committee sit "in a small office in downtown Southampton, a bunch of obvious working class slackers".[228] In another construction of the relationship between SISA and the club, SISA argued that Lowe "comes from a section of our society that rarely experiences close contact with the great unwashed, i.e. working class people. When he does face them, he adopts a one dimensional tactic that is the mark of his kind.... gross patronisation" [sic].[229]

In gender terms, the group fits wider fan group traditions: while the meeting was split roughly 85:15 in favour of men, until the appointment of a dedicated Women's Officer (discussed below), SISA's important offices were entirely male-dominated, and indeed even afterwards, the real power clearly rested with the (male) committee. Also interesting was the limited extent to which women were prepared to contribute: only two women members made contributions from the floor, and very few women were prepared to stand up (in order to catch the committee's attention and receive the hand-held microphone). The reasons for this are not clear - perhaps the women simply felt uncomfortable in a meeting containing 700 men under the gaze of the local media - but the result was to create a heavily male dominated evening, and an organisation that is essentially run by male fans. However, as with the other sample groups, the fact of maleness does not automatically turn SISA into a masculine organisation.

[228] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 44, page 19
[229] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 44, page 12

Moreover, it is clear that throughout the history of SISA active membership has depended heavily on the situation at the club: membership fell from a high of 800 in 1993-94 when Ian Branfoot was manager (and the centre of much controversy) to 400 the following season when, with Alan Ball as manager, the team performed creditably and star striker Matthew Le Tissier stayed and put in one of his best seasons for the club. Admittedly, this period was one of internal problems for SISA, which fell inactive for around a year: this followed a time when more 'political' members (like McMillan) were excluded from meetings, amidst allegations that once the anti-Branfoot work had been done, SISA allowed itself to be seduced by overtures from the club (like offers of an office at The Dell), steering itself towards NFFSC agenda. The decline in membership must be contextualised within the wider organisational decline and internal problems of SISA, but equally the fact that SISA did not naturally follow its success over Branfoot by moving onto other 'political' issues highlights the limited and highly specific sense of activism that inspires football supporters.

Highlighting that trend, when the various issues of the share dealings, the stadium and the botched take-over arose from late 1996, and its implications for the team became clearer, membership rose sharply, reaching 1800 by September 1997, and just under 2000 by May 1998. It is clear that to generate activism and interest, SISA require problems of an obvious and unambiguous nature, or a decline in team performance. McMillan, for instance, noted that in October 1998, with the team then bottom of the FAPL and the manager unpopular, a SISA meeting drew over 600 people, primarily, in his view, because the team was performing poorly, and that the aware and engaged long-term perspective that SISA was trying to generate and sustain foundered on the short-term and team-focused approach of the members and other supporters. SISA have thus not yet broken out of the classic role of being fans' 'emergency services', although membership levels of around 2000 still make SISA one of the biggest ISAs.

Structure and Activities

SISA operates very much like the FSA, with annual individual membership, an elected committee (based on matching talents and experience to positions available), regular public meetings, formalised agenda, tiny budgets, binding votes from the active membership on specific issues, and so on. Once more, the real dynamism came from the committee, dominated by two highly active individuals, which compensates for the usual lack of activism from members: of the members surveyed, the activism of fully 22 (88%) consisted of attending group meetings, while the vast bulk of the actual work was done by the committee. This was further enhanced by the fact that a proportion of SISA's work was conducted secretly, forcing senior committee member, Richard Chorley, to ask the meeting to simply trust SISA until it could reveal its strategy (particularly concerning Stoneham, and the share scandal). Equally, much of the work revolved around the press and media, which again restricts the scope for active involvement by large number of members. Of course, groups like SISA always need volunteers, and the reliance on the committee and limited involvement of most members suggest a fundamental lack of genuine activism and preparedness to invest the time necessary for such voluntary campaigning.

Funds were raised through the usual FSA mechanisms; producing club T-shirts and badges, car-stickers, running social events and organising collections at meetings ("the war-chest", as McMillan called it), plus more unusual schemes like running 0891 information telephone lines, producing CDs, and the usual reliance on the use of faxes, computers and photocopiers. This places SISA within the camp of revenue maximisers, dependent on donations and fund-raising for the funds to campaign, run by an un-paid committee. Membership of that committee had to be 'earned', by demonstrating one's real interest in and fierce commitment to Southampton FC and to the cause of SISA: these remain the key elements sought in committee members, which helps define SFC and SISA as genuine social spaces underpinned by personal 'selfless' activism and loyalty. SISA also engaged in what McMillan called "marketing", deliberately using the same facilities for every meeting, issuing professional membership cards and using

professionally-made banners to help generate a strong visual and social identity for Southampton fans: essentially SISA used the same post-Fordist processes that King locates at the heart of modern football, but for achieving ends that were fundamentally opposed to important parts of the application of those processes to football itself. A distinction must be drawn between generating the funds to continue, and commercialising, the ISA. Fiske identifies this economic element and the centrality of profit as part of the distinction between fan texts and the texts of official culture,[230] and SISA clearly fits the former category. Smith and Maughan identify a similar dichotomy of objective in their study of independent dance music producers: they distinguish between profit maximisation (as practised by mainstream music companies) and the independent producer's "need to sustain oneself in the real world".[231] Such a categorisation applies equally to ISAs, and divorces the 'commercial' from 'commercialism'.

SISA's campaigning operates on basically the same lines as at other groups, with a similar focus on respectable and responsible campaigning (discussed below). Again, there was a 'radical' element, which was marginalised, with SISA's leadership well aware of the need not to appear violent or militant (which, to some extent, was further exacerbated by SISA's significant use of the local media, and also by recollections of the bitter campaign against the manager, Ian Branfoot, when ambiguous headlines in the fanzine *On the March* were reported by local and national media as death threats). As such, SISA reject traditional tactics: at the 1997 meeting, held at the height of concerns and anger about the Directors and state of the team, the committee consistently warned against tactics that would allow opponents, including the club, to portray SISA as dangerous or violent. One member from the floor advocated direct action against the Directors, which won some limited applause, but the committee were firm in rejecting this approach, advocating the need for responsible peaceful behaviour, and for all campaigns to be properly planned and controlled by the committee. McMillan told the meeting that the watchword throughout was 'strategic', Chorley argued that the key

[230] Fiske 1992, page 39
[231] Smith and Maughan 1997, page 24

test of any SISA action should be 'effectiveness' and 'publicity', and as McMillan noted at a previous meeting, "if direct action is needed, we will take it. But we are not yobs or rabble-rousers."[232] Equally in other press releases and statements, there was a continual focus on SISA's peaceful campaigning (the local paper noted that SISA 'will... discuss peaceful ways of continuing its opposition to the club's current board').[233]

To this extent, limits on SISA's work were set by the club and media, in the sense that the tactics were non-violent, symbolic and relied on publicity. It was noticeable how easily the committee's rejections of direct action at the emergency meeting were accepted by the members, who needed little convincing of the need to work within certain limits. Even those who had advocated direct action were convinced, remarkably quickly, of the need not to embarrass the group and, in the end, there was essentially little argument about the sort of tactics to adopt, which does raise the possibility that calls for direct action were more the product of the situation facing SFC and an overwhelming desire to 'do something', than any strong desire for confrontation: the ease with which the meeting was persuaded to reject direct action suggests either an implausibly strong faith in the committee, or is testimony to a lack of *genuine* support for the idea as such in the first place.

More generally, SISA relied on Southampton fanzines, just as the FSA had done on *When Saturday Comes*.[234] Indeed, SISA and the one extant fanzine, *The Ugly Inside*, became so close that they shared a PO Box, the editor of the fanzine was a senior member of the committee, and the fanzine regularly carried pages of SISA articles alongside more general material. McMillan suggests that the three fanzines in existence in 1993 were "absolutely vital" in creating and sustaining SISA, and in getting information to supporters, especially when SISA could not afford to issue regular newsletters: the fanzine readership in turn provided a flow of information to SISA ("the group

[232] *Daily Echo*, 30 May 1997
[233] *Daily Echo*, June 1997
[234] Haynes 1995

with 10,000 spies"), creating a clear sense that the fanzine and the fan group were essentially two sides of the same coin.

SISA's strategies since the Branfoot campaign highlight this sense of responsibility, employing classic tactics like marching from Southampton town centre to The Dell, promising 500-strong marches through Winchester town centre to put pressure on Hampshire County Council (HCC) over the Stoneham development,[235] holding photo opportunities and visual demonstrations (throwing old season tickets books into the bin in the club car park), writing letters to the chairman, the local paper and the FA, drawing up petitions and votes of 'no confidence' in the Board, releasing 500 balloons into the air at one game (to support Stoneham), using Teletext and local media of all sorts to get their viewpoint across, [236] yellow card protests at matches, inviting the local media to public meetings, jamming the phone-lines of the local paper (felt by SISA to be partial to the club), issuing press releases, networking with other fan groups to establish the best tactics, meeting with influential council officials and the local business community, and sending deputations and making submissions (to the Taskforce, stadium planning meetings and other fora). Later tactics also included tracking down the owners of shares post-floatation, in the process identifying an Australian investment bank as a significant player in SFC in 1998.

More substantive approaches included requesting meetings with the club: over a period of some 18 months, SISA had regular quarterly meetings with Lowe, before the club stopped them: this approach of lobbying or courting influential figures has also included local and national journalists and politicians (like David Mellor), along with urging fans to write letters to local councillors and MPs (notably to turn the new stadium into an election issue),[237] and trying to organise live radio phone-ins on community radio stations. The committee twice visited the City of London to publicly lobby financial managers and investors (issuing leaflets about the Directors' share

[235] *South Hants Weekly News*, 27 November 1997
[236] *Football Pink*, March 1998
[237] *Daily Echo*, 20 April 1996

dealings and the club's financial standing, and then to lobby financiers for funds for St. Mary's site), organised singing protests at The Dell in support of Stoneham (to put pressure on HCC),[238] bought shares in Southampton Leisure Holdings to ensure access to the club's AGM, reports and full financial details,[239] organised a Stadium Rally in 1997 in support of Stoneham (attended by over 1000 fans including club officials and players) and a public referendum, and by 1997-98, held a series of secret meetings with Lowe and Cowen (though with misgivings). This approach clearly represents respectability, and combined with the group's focus on a 'properly' organised campaign, it is quite clear that SISA are neither traditional nor 'rabble-rousers' in the popular media view, and do not represent the militant edge of traditionality, but are restricted, and restrict themselves, by the need to cultivate a good image, and by the campaigns against Branfoot.

Another factor likely to limit the use of traditional tactics was the relatively broad class and interest coalition SISA created at the height of the struggle with Lowe and Cowen. Another organisation represented at the June meeting was *Businessmen Against the Board* (BAB), a pressure group of local capitalists fronted by a local businessman and Southampton supporter, with the aim of raising the interest of local businesses in the club and generating alternative capital should the existing directors be induced to withdraw. Within the same context, SISA worked with City financiers with an interest in the club, as well as the Community Stadium Independent Support Group (CSISG), a pro-Stoneham pressure group run by a local businessman that represented community interests.[240] Both CSISG and BAB worked closely with SISA, and it is obvious how the development and existence of such coalitions, and the need to maintain as wide a social and cultural base for SISA's work as possible, could restrict its tactics. The cultural world inhabited by local small businessmen has no place for the tactics used at Manchester City and Brighton, and instead these two groups connected to significant parts of SISA's work used standard pressure group tactics like lobbying,

[238] *Daily Echo*, 13 May 1997
[239] Minutes of SISA public meeting, 18 January 1997
[240] CSISG homepage located at *http://www.saintsfc.co.uk/otherpages/csisg.htm*

formal (and confidential) meetings, and agenda setting. In this way, SISA's scope for traditional methods was restricted (assuming the desire to employ this approach anyway), especially since the group stressed the need to offer the club positive ideas, and not simply criticism.

A further limiting aspect was the emphasis SISA places on the media; one of the most important modes of operation for fan groups, SISA committee members regularly offered photo-opportunities and soundbites to local and national media, and wrote a weekly column in the city's evening paper. The media were essential to SISA's ability to get their message across, particularly via building up links with journalists, and hence the effectiveness of their campaigning work was to a significant degree dependent on access to the media. Since SISA was effectively attempting to frame the news agenda, they had to have regard for the damage a bad image could inflict, and hence this *modus operandi* imposed restrictions on the activities they can engage in.

Crowd Demography and Social Exclusion

The issue of The Dell's demography is complicated by its capacity of just 15,000, and the fact that the club invariably sell out every fixture: this undoubtedly masks much potential social exclusion. This is not to say that price rises are not affecting Saints fans and their attendance patterns, but simply that the issue is complicated by the scarcity of tickets, making it hard to demonstrate social exclusion at The Dell.

McMillan suggests that, within the general context of SISA's work, the objective was not to take an exclusionary position of defending solely working class interests in the game, and while it may see itself as for working people and their interests, the group initially set out, with a very inclusive approach, to represent all those concerned with the problems of the club irrespective of background. This was despite the fact that, in practice, the centrality of money as the focal issue around which activism seemed most easily generated, meant that SISA tended to steer towards more traditional elements and concerns. This was not the intention of the group, however,

who "wanted to give everyone a voice", and defend the rights of all to join and participate. There was very much a sense that all those who call themselves fans and behave as such are as valid as each other, actively denying the exclusive and contemptuous approach of traditionality, with SISA taken in a fundamentally different direction by its construction of the club as representative of the city and the county, and as an element of the community in its widest sense.

The focus was thus firmly on prices and exclusion, and more generally the "working fan": McMillan was reluctant to over-categorise fans, but felt that the group had come to exist for those who "financially... needed a voice", amid reports of growing numbers of SISA members being priced out of attendance. The active members surveyed here, however, were not from this element: only three of the 25 members said their attendance patterns were adversely affected by price rises, but how far it is possible to disentangle processes of exclusion from the restrictions imposed by the low capacity is not clear. Nonetheless, the focus remains on the need to foreground the interests of ordinary working class fans, despite the apparently relatively wide class base of some of its work, and the absence of any members in this sample themselves priced out of the game.

This led to a concern with changes in the demography at The Dell, and concerns that the fans who provided the backbone of the club prior to the Sky era were being excluded. Ticket and merchandise prices and the introduction of wide-ranging ticket concessions (including for pensioners) were all areas where SISA brought pressure to bear on the club, while its Taskforce submission stressed tickets and pricing policies and disabled access to stadia, while also campaigning for price reductions for younger supporters. Prices and the crowd demography were issues that the active members supported, with 11 of the 25 suggesting it should be a SISA campaign priority, which was only bettered by the ground move. SISA support for authors like Conn also centred for instance on "the way in which the working class of England are having their leisure heritage stolen from beneath their

feet".[241] Equally interesting were the congratulations offered by McMillan to Liverpool's Robbie Fowler and Steve McManaman, for publicly showing their support for 500 sacked Liverpool dockers: McMillan congratulated the two for 'not forgetting their roots',[242] construing the club as a working class institution, in obvious defiance of FAPL norms.

The focus on the disadvantaged and their rejection of crude market forces mean that SISA do not easily fit the FAPL project of turning fans into customers[243] based around a non-outcomes based agenda, and are thus closer to traditionality, in that even if they defend the rights of *all* fans within The Dell, their campaigning still addresses exclusion and prices, and ignored class-based FAPL initiatives like 'no swearing' within stadia. Even the decision to buy shares in SFC (noted above) was partly taken to ensure representation on the issue of the financing of the ground, and particularly to ensure that the unemployed and low-paid were not priced out of it as a result.[244] It is interesting to note that 23 of the 25 members who answered the question agreed that the FAPL was an attempt to make football a middle-class sport, while of the 24 supporters who answered the question, 21 described themselves as 'traditional' fans.

The concept of keeping everything affordable to those identified as genuine fans was one that permeated much of what SISA do (as in their contemptuous reaction to the club's suggestion of adding £100 to the price of a season ticket to pay for the new stadium), but parallel to it is an approach that focuses on minority fans, disabled fans, women and families, making the overall agenda on crowd demography highly inclusive. SISA appointed a Women's Officer in 1998, who saw her job as one of ensuring that "the views of women supporters are equally represented within the footballing arena, be it at national or local level",[245] and approached a disabled Saints fan to become SISA's Disabled Officer after hearing of the problems of disabled

[241] Review of Conn 1997, in *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 47, page 11
[242] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 42, page 39
[243] King 1997b
[244] *Daily Echo*, 20 January 1997
[245] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 47, page 34

access. SISA privately raised the issue with the Taskforce, and also sought to have representatives of disabled supporters present at meetings between SFC and fans. This creates a highly inclusive and progressive approach, summed up by McMillan's comment that "the greatest thing that can happen to football is to break down these barriers that it's a male thing". The focus on minority fans included applying for grants from the *Let's Kick Racism Out of Football* campaign, which granted SISA £1150 to further racial equality at The Dell, while the group also attempted actively to take the message of Southampton FC to the city's minority communities. Indeed, a senior Committee member, Richard Chorley, who co-ordinated the grant, was later invited to sit on Southampton City Council committees dealing with a whole range of racism issues. Racism in football was also addressed in SISA's submission to the Taskforce. This agenda also extended to visiting the St Mary's site for the proposed new ground with the *Let's Kick Racism Out of Football* campaign, to see how the development would impact on the local Asian community, discussions which were then fed directly into the work of Southampton Council's race policy unit.[246] Again, clearly, this highly engaged and aware approach is out of step with historically understood notions of traditionality, though it does fit terrace culture of the late 1980s at certain clubs and FSA culture: yet, equally, it is outside dominant FAPL values, particularly since, in the main, attempts by clubs to address racism are born out of commercial self-interest, and not SISA's community-based morality, stressing the role of the club as a community asset for *all*. The current dominant culture of football is essentially de-politicised in a number of ways, and to stress anti-racism and an engaged interest in access for a variety of minorities within a highly inclusive overall demography resists some vital FAPL values (such as the shift from community 'representative' or asset to commercial organisation).

As with BIFA, there is a clear imbalance between the group's demographic profile and its demographic objectives (particularly with regard to both minority and female fans), both a feature of the FSA, and also indicative of an

[246] SISA column, *Daily Echo*, 7 November 1998

engaged political ethos with roots beyond football (both McMillan and Chorley are themselves political activists outside SISA and the game). The progressive nature of this agenda is not identifiably the product of pressure from 'interest' elements within SISA (i.e. minority or female members themselves), but is clearly born out of a deeper political engagement and approach. It is, once again, interesting to note that only one of the 25 SISA members identified anti-racism as an issue that the group should prioritise, reinforcing the central role of the members of the committee in the work that SISA does and the importance of their own agenda.

McMillan noted that the only section of the crowd that SISA objected to were corporate spectators, though even here there was no active resistance to their presence or the way that clubs court them. Like other fan groups, SISA dichotomise fans who follow Southampton FC (those who *support* the team), and those who use match-day for other purposes unconnected to the team. This obviously strikes at the corporate hospitality project of top clubs, but also at traditionality, since by identifying support for the team as the key variable, SISA deny to some extent the focus on different traditions of behaviour and forms of support within the ground that traditional working class fandom operated with. However, despite this, there was no groundswell of opinion against corporate hospitality, and instead SISA displayed a contemptuous tolerance and acceptance of the corporate sector, presumably for financial reasons: of the members, a small majority supported the idea of corporate bars in the new stadium at Stoneham, and a larger, two-thirds majority backed the idea of corporate suites or boxes (discussed below). However, there was a clear lack of enthusiasm or respect for the corporate sector, and SISA identified themselves with other elements of the crowd with other reasons for attending games. Even if SISA never actively campaigned against the corporate element, they clearly rejected them as genuine fans, and expected the club instead to focus on involving all the local communities rather than courting the corporate pound.: to so dichotomise the nature of fandom resists modern values in two ways: firstly, rejecting the dominant notion that all paying customers are equal regardless of their motivation for attendance or their practices within the ground - for SISA's committee, the

fact that corporate spectators pay for their tickets does not legitimate their presence or motivation in attending games - creates a hierarchy of acceptable supporters. Secondly, it re-fashions the *raison d'être* of the club: FAPL clubs do not (with the potential exception of Leicester City) construe themselves as community assets, and most have few genuine links with their community, a conception that SISA clearly seek to re-impose on SFC.

Generally, however, SISA draw upon football's history and the involvement of working class fans within that, to construct a view of the present that stresses the need to protect working class interests, even if not to the exclusion of other demographic groups within the crowd. As with BIFA, instead of teleologically collapsing football's history, as King suggests,[247] SISA identify football's working class roots as the starting point to work from. Also favoured are families watching football, with a clear emphasis within SISA campaigning on restructuring ticket and price systems to ensure that families are not marginalised. This is visible in the (successful) lobbying at the end of 1997-98 to have reserve team games played at The Dell, with a promotional focus on 'Dads and Lads', starting from the premise that the younger generation are being excluded and need pricing and ticket systems that cater for them. Equally, families were explicitly targeted in the buses SISA ran from the city centre to reserve team games at Staplewood[248] (an idea ultimately taken up by the club themselves, having initially claimed its impossibility), and SISA's pro-Stoneham Stadium Rally held in December 1997 was specifically advertised as "a fun day for all the family",[249] with the money raised from draws and raffles donated to local charities. Equally the SISA leaflet for the 1997 testimonial of the long-standing defender Francis Benali suggested that "fans make it a family fun night to remember for years".[250]

What is interesting within that was the absence of any support for FAPL glitzy family football, with the focus throughout on improving access for fans who watch as a family (particularly regarding ticket arrangements). Like BIFA,

[247] King 1997a
[248] *Daily Echo*, 20 April 1996
[249] SISA publicity leaflet, 'Rally for the Stadium', 1997

SISA's version of family support is families watching football together, with the emphasis on the football (a view expressed in *The Ugly Inside*, in campaign work and by committee members). It is this key aspect that detaches SISA from the family discourses of the FAPL, by constructing family supporters as a wider phenomenon than the middle-class service sector families of the modern game,[251] but as across class divides and attending first and foremost out of a love for Southampton. On this view, the ideology which the modern game imposes on the family as a social formation is detached from the formation itself.

Commercial Exploitation

Just as at Sheffield United, Southampton fans perceived a failure to exploit modern commercial opportunities to the club's advantage. Apart from SISA's campaign for a club shop in the city centre, McMillan also reported anger amongst fans at the fact that, under Askham, the club shop was sub-contracted to Wembley Stadium PLC, so that its operations were not directly benefiting SFC. He suggested that "it does frustrate us when we see clubs like Leicester who have their own kit and leisure facilities, and we go to Nationwide [League] clubs who have bigger and better club shops than we've got." The sub-contracting arrangements meant some supporters refused to buy merchandise, and there was a feeling that Wembley did not understand the merchandise designs Saints fans would accept. SISA therefore urged SFC to bring the operation in-house, to allow fans to feel that the expenditure was directly benefiting the club, that is, seeking to enhance the commercial business of the club: this shares the dominant agenda to some extent, that merchandising is central to football's modern business, a factor enhanced by Southampton's size relative to other FAPL clubs. Within this, however, the notion of 'traditional' kits was clearly to the fore: Southampton fans bitterly opposed the blue away kits, or the yellow design that SISA successfully campaigned to have replaced at the end of the 1997-98 season. SISA focused heavily on the traditional red and white stripes, resented the

[250] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 42, page 42
[251] King 1997b

"glorified ticks and Vs" superimposed on it, and actively campaigned for the reintroduction of what fans recognised as the club's colours.

This is clearly in line with traditionality, based on history, identity and success: as one SISA writer put it, "the 1976 Cup Final [in which Southampton wore blue and yellow] is the nearest SFC has ever come to making an impression in football's glory books".[252] As McMillan put it, SISA explicitly rejects the construction of kits as leisure ranges, and the practice of re-designing kits simply because "they are supposed to go nicely with a pair of jeans". He indeed suggested a need to protect the colours of the club from the merchandising people, who have a different agenda. As previously with BIFA, this amounts to a fundamental rejection of the commercial logic inherent in modern paradigms, where symbolic forms of identity (like traditional colours) are subordinated to the commercial desire to appeal to wider leisure markets. Insisting on red and white stripes for the home kit, and yellow and blue for the away kit, hems in the club, since it offers little scope to issue a new, distinct and marketable kit every two years, albeit that the notion of not changing the kit is not an option here either, and, to that extent, the principle is conceded.

The only *caveats* (apart from the issue of design, which SISA took so far as to meet the kit manufacturers directly) were standard FSA worries about the price of merchandise, and the view that the club was exploiting fans' loyalty by continually raising them ("as long as things are done at an affordable price, I think that's our bottom line"). McMillan highlighted not only the issue of social exclusion around merchandise, but also the impact on families ("it forces the parents to then fork out on even more expensive kit"), and the use of child labour by global kit manufacturers to make the kits. Importantly, SISA suggested that merchandising operations should always have a clear purpose, to benefit the team and fans, and not exist for their own sake or for that of the Directors (which is clearly not the case at clubs that have floated).

[252] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 47, page 8

But generally, the fact that the club was not generating revenue from (legitimate) commercial operations under Askham was seen as a problem: none of the supporters surveyed here were explicitly opposed to merchandising or football's commercialisation - no doubt, just as at Sheffield United, the fact that SISA gained some fan input into the new kit designs and that the club started to run the shop themselves helped legitimate these commercial operations. McMillan's suggestion that many Saints refused to spend money in the club store while it was sub-contracted to Wembley but were happy to do so afterwards highlights this, and suggests that the principle of merchandising was not itself the issue, but more how it was done - the plans for Stoneham for instance always featured greatly expanded commercial operations, which SISA accepted. Furthermore, of course, the significant financial pressures on Southampton compared to most other FAPL clubs no doubt pushed fans towards an acceptance of merchandise and commercial operations, as another means by which the club can survive.

Directors and Shares

A little addressed, but central, element of football's transformation into a business is the increasingly widespread view that an investment in a football club is like any other investment, which means it is perfectly legitimate to expect and receive profits, including for the Directors of the Club. It is common across a whole number of FAPL clubs for directors and senior management to be awarded substantial share options (like Robin Launders at Leeds United) and to earn enormous returns on relatively small investments,[253] but since this is a relatively new phenomenon, it is hard to say how it would be construed within the traditional view: it is possible that traditionality would consider these large profits objectionable or beyond reasonable proportions, and resent that these profits were made from 'their' football club. But perhaps central to traditional fans' attitudes is how such profits are generated, and the extent to which the team is affected by the financial strategies that generate these fortunes. It is however clearly easier to argue that new spectatordom will take little interest in these trends, and will

[253] Conn 1997, chapter 10

either feel that such profits are the valid market return on investments, or the issue is simply not part of their fandom.

At SFC, shares, share dealings and profits made by directors were active questions from 1997, and issues upon which SISA campaigned strongly. Their approach clearly set them apart from FAPL and new spectator thinking, highlighting distinct and politicised views on who is fit to be a Director, the role of the Board, and the nature of the club, particularly in relation to the wider community. Allegations about the directors' share dealings over a number of years achieved national prominence in the summer of 1997, amid allegations that directors had bought shares from relatives of deceased shareholders for less than 1% of their actual market value (by concealing their genuine worth), and that other shareholders may not have been told of the impending floatation before they sold their shares at a nominal cost to directors.[254] SISA's response to these and similar accusations, and the comments of members present at the meeting in June 1997, indicates a strong sense that SFC must never be the plaything of City investors, and that the club is not there for the benefit of Directors or shareholders. Such views contradict FAPL values that help construct football as a business like any other, and that facilitate, if not invite corporate finance to become involved.

SISA took the issue of shares sufficiently seriously so as to investigate the dealings of the old Board, in the event condemning their profit-motivated activities and arguing that SFC should be a community asset and not a profit-generator for private individuals. They were also prepared to spend precious time at the public Taskforce meeting to grill the hapless Chief Executive of the FA, Graham Kelly, on the ins-and-outs of the share dealings, particularly as related to his chairman, ex-Southampton director Keith Wiseman, and to complain later to the FA regarding the disinterest Kelly showed in the matter. It was also raised in SISA's private sessions with the Taskforce, and formed the basis of a SISA resolution to the 1998 FSA conference. SISA's investigations concluded that six directors who each made instant profits of

[254] *Electronic Telegraph*, 23 January 1997, 'Saints shares sold to chiefs ahead of bid'; *Mirror*, 12 June and 16 June 1997 (page 18)

between £200,000 and £1m had done so through suspicious share dealings, pointing out additionally and importantly that their total investment outlay had only ever amounted to £16,750. SISA's committee were particularly outraged at the methods by which these shareholdings had been built up, and at the denial to subsequent generations of their "birthright" of shares legitimately passed down by relatives. SISA clearly hold that shares in Southampton are not like any other stock, and that shareholders should be motivated by support for the club. The group were particularly critical of the "profit and run"[255] mentality, and what they saw as corporate greed, and noted their desire to see a "chairman with appropriate financial acumen and personal investment, coupled with genuine love for the red and white shirts".[256] The Committee indeed explicitly suggested that "there is no point becoming a member of a campaigning group [SISA] if your base instincts are not able to accommodate conflict with the capitalists who have overrun our national game".[257] Such positions clearly resist every aspect of FAPL view of the financing of clubs.

SISA's committee and members consistently contra-posed the motivations of fans and directors, and the 1997 meeting resounded with complaints that the directors were not fans and were using the club for their own financial ends, and repeated claims by Committee members that the directors were motivated purely by profit always drew large applause. This was particularly the case in 1998 when SFC released details of directors' pay, sparking complaints that not only were scarce clubs funds going to non-executive and other directors for no discernible reason, but that the directors were awarding these rises to each other.[258] This state of affairs was contrasted with the hope that rich Southampton fans would invest in the club, and complaints that the club had prevented genuine fans from investing significant amounts in the club.[259] Two implications follow: firstly, that there was an acceptance of the need for money for the club, but the source of that money is crucial to the

[255] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 44, page 5
[256] SISA column, *Daily Echo*, 10 October 1998, emphasis added
[257] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 42, page 33
[258] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 50, pages 7 and 9
[259] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 48, page 7

way it is viewed. Secondly, that the conceptual divide between those who involve themselves with the club for their own benefit, and those who invest as fans is obviously at odds with FAPL culture and practice, and with the market-driven values of new spectatorism. Both the committee and members saw support for the club as important a qualification for a prospective director as funds to invest in it: as one SISA column put it, relegation should cause directors to 'feel the genuine shame and despair of a fan'.[260]

SISA's position is essentially traditional, stressing the need to respect the club's history, and to empathise with the experiences of ordinary fans. It is striking how many fans felt that the best way to run SFC was via local wealthy supporters, with the emphasis on all three elements. Of the twenty-one fans with a view on how best to run and finance SFC, seventeen mentioned the need for club directors to have a personal knowledge of the game and/or SFC, for the involvement of local businessmen, or for the club to remain under the control of people who genuinely support it. The committee were equally at pains to underline their understanding of the need for professional and financial acumen, but these had to be allied to a genuine love for the club, as in the support SISA gave to a consortium led by Gavin Davies (Deputy Chairman of the Bank of England) and the broadcaster David Frost, both Saints, who wanted to buy out Lowe and Cowen at the height of the club's problems in the summer of 1997. For SISA, the knowledge that the injection of capital from the consortium would go to SFC and the team, and not to the Directors, combined with the knowledge that those involved were genuine fans, made the proposed take-over one they could, and did, support.

Testimony to this were complaints about the directors' ignorance of SFC's history: Lowe and Cowen's lack of knowledge regarding Southampton (Cowen mistook the name of the Southampton player who scored the winning goal in the 1976 FA Cup Final, the club's last trophy, and Lowe was widely inaccurate in comments about SFC's recent record) were in themselves not significant, but for SISA's committee and members, they

[260] SISA column, *Daily Echo*, 24 October 1998

symbolised the directors' lack of affective ties to SFC or empathy with the fans, and more generally their suspect motives in joining the Board. As *The Ugly Inside* noted, "even more disturbing is [Lowe's] clear and frightening lack of knowledge and passion for football itself. Quite simply the man is not qualified for the job".[261] The scorn poured on some directors for such errors (like McMillan's complaints that they "can't even describe the greatest single five seconds in the club's history without slipping up",[262] and that "passion for the game and Saints [Southampton FC] in particular is what Lowe and Cowen lack")[263] points to an entirely different construction of the club, and the proper motivations of its directors, from the FAPL ethos and current trends in hiring personnel at FAPL clubs. As the committee noted in *The Ugly Inside*, "we are sure that you [Lowe] and your associates are highly competent in your specialist fields. Sadly football is a very different world to the one you are accustomed to",[264] again separating, in a much more traditional fashion, football from business.

Rejecting the personal financial motivations for becoming a director questions the modern financial strategies of top division clubs, and the transformation of clubs into businesses: SISA's approach to this issue, and the storm of protest they led against the enormous returns made by directors, and the people who took control following the reverse take-over, fit traditional views on the nature of the club, as traditionality would argue that money made by the club should be ploughed back into the team or club facilities, and not 'siphoned' off to the pockets of directors. At the meeting, McMillan and Chorley both noted the corrosive effects of business intruding into the football world, which received much support, just one of the numerous complaints about the business motives of the directors, particularly in view of the consequent effects on the capitalisation of the club and its ability to build Stoneham. It is the trade-off between the interests of the club and those of the directors that became the focus of discontent, with SISA noting how the less than transparent share dealings of the directors had reduced the value

[261] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 44, pages 10-11
[262] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 44, page 13
[263] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 44, page 7

of the shares and so made it harder to raise the finance for Stoneham.[265] This injects a new element into the equation surrounding the commercial business conducted by the directors, such that the interests of SFC have to be directly traded off against the personal interests of the directors, a conflict that in the eyes of fans can obviously only be resolved in one way.

In resisting the modern financial project of the FAPL, and starting from premises that fundamentally redefine the club and its proper sphere of operation and interest, SISA clearly stray onto FSA territory (though it is likely that traditionality will also reject the enormous profits made by directors).

It is also interesting how often committee and 'ordinary' members alike noted how SFC represents the city and Hampshire in general. McMillan spoke of the passion for the club within the context of Hampshire, and Hampshire's passion for, and pride in, the club, and how SFC can draw an identity and strength from that, while Chorley suggested that the club act as a standard-bearer for the county. One article in the fanzine suggested, "SISA speaks for Southampton fans from Southampton, and is a credit to this city's community".[266] This sense of the club as representing the area and therefore acting as community asset is outside the FAPL conception of the club (a globalised or 'nation'-alised leisure brand), though the case of Southampton is further complicated by the fact that it is a considerable distance from any club of similar stature and so has a much larger catchment area to aim at. But while FAPL ideology accepts the notion of seeking to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, symbolically tying it down to Hampshire and its immediate vicinity (as SISA do) and seeking to project such a specific identity, is outside FAPL discourses, which would limit the financial and commercial opportunities that flow from a successful 'nation-alisation' of a club (like Liverpool or Manchester United). The declining links between club, town and community, central to these capital processes, are entirely alien to SISA and its view of SFC.

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[264] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 44, page 30
[265] *The Share Game*, issued by SISA, 1997
[266] Letter to *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 44, page 5

SISA's adulation for long-serving full-back Francis Benali and desire for him to become president of SISA for life, had much to do with his Southampton origins: as the SISA publicity for his testimonial noted, "it may be a long time before a Southampton born lad serves the club so well",[267] an attitude that even appears in arguments for an extension to his contract. One issue of *The Ugly Inside* suggested that as a Southampton-born player, Benali is "part of the soul of Southampton FC', and notes his "genuine love for this great city".[268] Implicit in this is the view that a Southampton born player will appreciate better than others the cultural significance of the club to the fans, and this focus on the region and the locality resists modern de-localising trends in football that are central to the FAPL's long-term objective of profit maximisation. Equally SISA's view that the club's away kit should reflect not just Southampton's traditions and history, but also incorporate the traditional colours of the Hampshire regiment is an interesting and unusual conceptualisation of the kit, and has the added advantage of restricting opportunities for its commercial exploitation. As already suggested, the notion of the club as community asset has other implications that are essentially outside FAPL values: SISA took this conception of the club as community asset to a logical extension with their suggestion to the Taskforce that the community schemes run by clubs should be radically extended, with the creation of formalised community work and liaison roles for players. This is symbolic of the view SISA take of the club, indicates their resistance to the idea of the club as business with its implication that players are workers like in any other industry, and redefines the club in ways redolent of Taylor's early conception of the player as local celebrity.[269]

This feeds into SISA's long-term aim of getting genuine fan representation on the board, which as with BIFA, punctures the logic of the FAPL business ethos. Raised at the Taskforce, this issue had to remain in the background while the share dealings and stadium were addressed, but the sense that

[267] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 42, page 42
[268] Both quotes from *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 47, page 32
[269] Taylor 1971

fans are actually stakeholders and have a right to information, consultation and representation pervades SISA's ethos, forming a fundamentally different view of the club than that presented by the private capital ethos of the FAPL. This also manifests itself in SISA's recommendation to the Taskforce (privately, and in public session) for external regulation of floated clubs, to reconcile the conflicts created by the switch to listed status.

How this identity contributes to traditionality remains something of an open question: traditional fandom was obviously centred squarely on locality, but often in the negative senses of rivalry and opposition, rather than the socially-informed positive identity derived from being a standard-bearer for a city or region. Clearly the notion that the team's away kit should symbolise the county's local regiment is unlikely to feature in traditionality (despite the history of Army recruitment at stadia in World War One). That said, however, the symbolic value and identity bestowed upon the club is itself traditional in nature, and resists modern attempts to strip clubs of their social and cultural meaning (beyond that derived from operating as a 'leisure option'). Such an attitude also has obvious implications for the nature of fandom more generally, as well as impacting on various commercial processes.

Relations with other Fans and Fan Groups

One of the central issues in the late 1980s, as noted in Chapter One, was the rise of the FSA, a coalition of thousands of fans, regardless of club loyalty, into one organisation designed to take on the game, an approach outside the club-based and individuated FAPL culture: SISA have a more traditionally ambivalent attitude towards cross-club issues, and fit into both the FAPL culture that sees no responsibilities or implications towards other clubs, and also traditionality with its narrow focus on the one club and the issues that affect it, based around rivalry and oppositional identities. Throughout their history, SISA have rarely campaigned on issues that do not address the needs of Southampton fans in some way, and when they have aligned themselves with other supporter groups, this has been over common issues that still had direct relevance to the experiences of Southampton fans. While SISA's own resume of its history makes no mention of any campaign that

addresses cross-club or non-club issues, there are references to attempts to forge links with the FSA and ISA network;[270] more specifically, SISA were at the forefront of proposals to merge the FSA and the ISAs into one national independent campaigning body for fans, [271] as well as contributing to the cross-club campaign over the Office of Fair Trading case brought against Sky and the FAPL in 1998.[272] It is, therefore, instructive that of the 23 SISA members who answered the question, 21 had never been members of the FSA or NFFSC, and of those, nine explicitly preferred SISA precisely because of its concentration on Southampton-focused issues.

Within that context, co-operation with other supporters was legitimated either by the enormity of the situation (like the Hillsborough campaign) or because the issue was one where the interests of Southampton fans happened to coincide with other supporters. This is particularly true of SISA's leading role in the 1998 Bring Back Terraces campaign, arranging demonstrations at a number of fixtures across the country in support of terracing: while this involved close liaison with other supporters, it did not genuinely break out of traditional concepts of campaigning work, since atmosphere was also an issue at The Dell (as reported both by McMillan and *The Ugly Inside*), and much of the home end stand up during games anyway. To this extent, SISA's work on terraces, despite its cross-club nature, addresses active questions at Southampton, and so does not necessarily create any inclusive or general ethos towards much more 'weighty' issues at lower division clubs. There was one major exception, the minibus carrying 30 SISA members that went to Brighton FC for the Fans United day in February 1997, which like BIFA, started from the premise that all fans had to support a fellow club in such a dire situation.[273] SISA also arranged matches against other supporters (Sunderland and West Ham fanzines for instance), as part of a process of breaking down barriers between different groups of fans, and creating networks of contacts. In much the same vein, what *The Ugly Inside* called

[270] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 44, page 31
[271] Outlined in SISA document 'FSA - ISA merger', SISA, 1998
[272] *Electronic Telegraph*, 24 January 1999, *http://www.telegraph.co.uk*
[273] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 41, page 4

creating "supporter harmony and friendship"[274] via such games actively denies important elements of the oppositional rivalry and identity central to traditionality, and instead draws on FSA agenda, where fans seek common understanding. But these are isolated instances for SISA, and confirm that fans generally concern themselves with other clubs and campaigns only in an emergency, which does not include long-term problems that beset lower divisions clubs, and, in this important sense, the SISA view concurs with dominant conceptions of each club as basically self-enclosed.

Once again, within this context, the role of the personal politics of the committee was crucial in breaking out of such narrow paradigms: this is particularly true of the efforts made to create the new national campaigning body noted above, which can essentially be attributed to McMillan and Chorley's personal passion for the issue. In the list of issues that members defined as SISA priorities, every suggestion was entirely-SFC specific, none involved any other club, and therefore the committee, in driving SISA in other directions, have played a pivotal role in expanding the work of SISA such that it can break out of both traditional and FAPL paradigms and, to some, extent re-create the FSA ethos of cross-club campaigning. The low priority given to these issues by the members, however, is further testimony to the reluctance to politicise fandom in these abstract ways, and the extent to which supporters react, first and foremost, to that which affects them.

The Stadium

Stadia encompasses many of the central issues tied up in the transformation of modern football, and its attempts to increase revenues and maximise profit. The Dell and SISA's response to club plans to move to a new site help therefore illuminate many important questions.

The first issue clearly is whether or not to leave The Dell: some club moves in the 1990s have been unavoidable (Sunderland and Bolton), whereas others reveal economic motivations central to the FAPL project (Everton's projected

[274] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 48, page 6

move from Goodison can only be adequately explained via reference to the then chairman's investments, and desire to attract a new middle class and corporate clientele). But the situation at Southampton is clearer: there has been talk of leaving The Dell for over two decades, based on its paucity of car parking, declining capacity, and lack of space to expand: there is essentially no debate on whether the club should move. All the fans surveyed here supported the proposed move, and all who answered the question 'why?' cited inadequacy of the present site (particularly its restricted capacity). Therefore, the debate concerned where to move to, what to build and how to finance it: SISA always supported plans to leave The Dell, and campaigned first for a £53m 25,000 seat stadium and leisure development at Stoneham (outside the city boundaries, under the joint control of Eastleigh and Southampton City Councils and also Hampshire County Council), and then, from May 1998, for a £15m-£25m 30,000 seat design at a disused gas site in the Chapel area of St Mary's, one of Southampton's most deprived areas, controlled by Southampton City Council (the club formally submitted plans for this development in December 1998).

SISA's view of Stoneham was a genuine community facility, with the objectives of opening up the ground to supporters currently excluded by the low capacity at The Dell, creating access for local schools and community groups, improving facilities for fans (including elements that had been a problem for years at The Dell, notably car-parking), and ultimately securing the club's financial position for the future by creating a much larger capacity. Some of these motives do not fit comfortably into FAPL culture or its financial motivations, notably the community discourse and the attempts to use the new stadium to re-integrate all sections of the Saints fanbase. Building a new stadium to change the supporter base is clearly outside what SISA consider valid, and SISA's position and values are not within the mainstream FAPL culture, where the stadium is a part of the project of transforming the spectator base, and making consumption the central paradigm of fandom. SISA's committee indeed were very keen on other conceptions of the stadium, to ensure access for lower-income fans, which was partly, as noted above, the motivation for buying club shares, to ensure that the interests of

the less well-off were protected as the new stadium was built, and avoid the exclusionary bond schemes implemented at West Ham and Arsenal in the early 1990s.[275] This also informed SISA's desire for local council involvement, since as McMillan argues, 'with a local authority, you are likely to get far more concessions than you are off a club'.

SISA's conceptualisation of the ground was very different from that represented by recent redevelopments in England, and those elements of the development that do fit FAPL discourses (such as restaurants, bars, shops, 'family entertainment centre') were accepted as part of a wider, more important package. The overall proposals would have produced a genuine community stadium, and as such would have resisted elements of both traditionality and FAPL fandom. A stadium newsletter produced by the various councils explicitly notes how "the needs of all sections of the community must be catered for".[276] Stoneham was to include concert facilities, function suites, a lecture theatre, car parking for nearly 4,500 cars, table tennis centre, indoor sprint track, bowling green, fast-food outlets, public information services, an athletics tracks, gymnastics hall, tennis courts and community football pitches to form a multi-purpose sports complex, with the council retaining freehold ownership of the 60-acre site.[277] Other facilities included measures to discourage on-street parking in the residential areas near the ground, and on-site cycle routes and public transport links (park & ride schemes, links to the railway stations, and coach facilities).

However, for SISA a new stadium was more important than any given plan. As the Stoneham project ran into ever greater planning problems, SISA suggested in 1997-98 season that some elements of the development (notably the extra sports facilities) be jettisoned in order to ensure that the stadium was built.[278] This suggestion was repeated at the end of the 1997-98 season when SISA noted that "if [the new site] sadly has to mean losing the

[275] *Daily Echo*, 20 January 1997
[276] *Stadium Update Newsletter*, July 1996, page 4, produced by Eastleigh, Southampton and Hampshire councils
[277] *Daily Echo*, 8 September 1995
[278] 'Saints fans counting on Eastleigh Council', SISA column, *Daily Echo*, November 1997

wonderful community sports facilities, then that will be an ideological shame. SISA has always viewed a new football stadium as the number one priority - that has to be the position of all Saints fans".[279] While it is possible that it was the unhelpful attitude of Eastleigh County Council and local residents that led to SISA losing patience with these proposals, and reverting to plans that avoided such problems, McMillan was insistent that given a choice, the community aspects of the ground were an important factor that SISA respected and lobbied for, as part of their wider community-based approach towards SFC. One SISA article had previously argued that the "proposed development will bring in jobs and bring in sports to children of all ages [whose] only previous connection with sports facilities is the shameful local sports centre",[280] through both the construction of facilities for local people and schools (an idea going back to the late 1970s' Football and the Community schemes of) and also by ensuring easy access to such facilities.

Within this context of the stadium as an active issue, SISA members were asked to choose as many from a list of specific design features as they wanted to see incorporated into Southampton's next ground, ignoring any legal or financial constraints: the results are laid out in Table Three.[281]

Table Three: The facilities SISA members wanted to see at Stoneham (n=21)[282]

DESIGN FEATURE	IN FAVOUR	OPPOSED
On-site leisure facilities	11	10
Sport facilities for local schools etc	13	7
Bars/restaurants for 'ordinary' spectators	17	4
Bars/restaurants for corporate spectators	11	10
Family stands/enclosures	19	2
Terraces	19	2
Dedicated public transport links	17	4
Dedicated car parking	14	7
Corporate boxes/suites	13	8
'Ordinary' match-day suites	9	12

[279] 'Southampton could even be coming home', SISA column, *Daily Echo*, 16 May 1998
[280] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 47, page 41
[281] Respondents could also suggest any 'other features' they wanted to see incorporated, as discussed further below.
[282] As noted in Chapter Two, an error meant that these detailed options about the new stadium were not asked of the first batch of survey forms collected from SISA members.

Such a stadium highlights not only interesting attitudes towards other issues, but more directly the extent to which the SISA ground would resist some important elements of FAPL fandom, and limit some of its more significant revenue streams. The strong support for a return to terraced areas is a case in point, an issue that SISA have long campaigned for, locally and nationally and at the Taskforce (even though it was not part of its remit). This draws SISA back towards traditionality, construing fans as active participants expressing their loyalty and identity through their fandom, and not as passive, club-controlled spectators. The large majority amongst members in favour of terraces suggests strong support for the active SISA campaign in favour of terraces or standing areas. The motivations for this were primarily for the re-creation of working class spaces within the ground, to re-establish areas within the stadium where traditional modes of engagement with football (singing, ecstatic participation, 'getting behind' the team, creating an intimidatory atmosphere for the away team) are revived and legitimated,[283] within a framework of non-violence. The press release for the Stand Up at Football Campaign in 1998 argued for terraces on the basis of atmosphere, capacity, price and choice.[284] Capacity is a technical point (the relative stadium capacities that can be built with terraces and without) and form part of neither school of fandom, but the arguments around atmosphere and price resist FAPL culture in central ways, while choice (ironically) takes the guiding principle of the FAPL's own consumer discourse, and applies it to the one area where it allows no choice, totally subverting its meaning and application (which, in dominant discourses, is the choice to consume).[285] SISA were also quite aware of, and open about, the fact that such a move is viewed as "a return to tradition at our grounds",[286] and that SISA supported those fans in the Bikeshed End of The Dell who stood up during games and so were "doing their bit to help preserve a traditional right and custom",[287] with the campaign for terracing to include chants such as "stand up like we used to

[283] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 47, page 16
[284] *National Stand Up Day*, joint press release by SISA and IMUSA, March 1998
[285] King 1997b
[286] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 47, page 31
[287] SISA column, *Daily Echo*, 15 August 1998

do". Their construction of modernisation, and what football should be about, were therefore radically removed from much of modern norms.

Equally interesting were the small majorities who supported the introduction of corporate bars and restaurants and also corporate boxes (11-10 and 13-8 respectively) at the new ground. Clearly, there was resistance to the FAPL notions of the centrality of corporate custom, and the need to attract such spectators to the game by offering facilities specifically for them. More generally, the view of the facilities at the ground does not directly fit dominant revenue-maximising norms either, as seen from the small support for on-site leisure facilities (as at Sheffield United and Chelsea) that are increasingly deemed central to the redefinition of the modern stadium. Nearly half the sample were opposed to the creation of these facilities, which would restrict the revenue that the ground could generate. Instead there was larger support for local schools and community groups having access to the stadium.

However while these values resist important elements of the reconstruction of the game, they are not traditional in their nature, and, indeed, some parts of SISA's stadium blueprint would reject traditionality. Apart from the overwhelming support for family stands, there was also support for a crèche at the ground (four of the five respondents who suggested another stadium feature identified a crèche), while SISA would also build recycling facilities. The 'narrow' view traditionality takes of football and its fans can barely accommodate these features.

Interestingly, this can also be seen in attitudes towards the financing and ownership of the new facility; mainstream traditionality, with its non-community and non-political approach, would not support council involvement with the ground, or public ownership, an approach towards the modern ground that SISA in fact support. McMillan noted a preference for 'the examples in France where the stadia are actually run by local authorities, that would be the ideal situation we would look to'. Of the 21 fans with a view on how to finance the new ground, 66% (14) agreed the council should build and finance it (with contributions from the club) and that the club would take

on a long-term lease. While such arrangements do exist at some clubs (Northampton Town, Halifax, Tranmere), this is usually the product of extreme circumstances, and as yet has never been the *preferred* model in England, despite its prevalence in Europe.[288] The lack of control they offer clubs over stadia, central to commercialisation and profit maximisation,[289] means such arrangements are outside FAPL norms. Only four members fully accepted the FAPL mentality of private ownership and control, by agreeing that the new stadium should be entirely financed and owned by SFC.

Another motive of the committee in advocating a central role for the council, apart from reinforcing the project's community aspects, was to ensure *access* to the ground, in the hope that ticket price and concessions would be more easily enforced. The sense that, as a business, the club cannot be entrusted to protect the community elements of the stadium blueprint, or ensure access for all, is not just the product of practical experiences at clubs throughout football's history, but also rejects the dominant notion that business processes essentially benefit football fans (as put forward by both club officials and by academics, notably Cheffins).[290] Other elements of the new ground supported by this sample of fans include dedicated transport links to and from the stadium (by a majority of two-thirds) and dedicated car parks for fans (again two-thirds). Once more, SISA's focus on the less well-off fan is evident, with the notion of providing dedicated public transport for those without their own tying in with concrete campaign work on the issue of buses to reserve games (noted above), to create a sense that the club is, and has to be, fundamentally shaped by, and part of, the community.

One or two features would however have been in line with FAPL values: SISA always supported the commercial facilities central to Stoneham (outlined above),[291] and while there was a sense of pragmatism about this,

[288] Duke 1994
[289] Which explains threats by Inter Milan and AC Milan in 1997 to leave the council-owned San Siro unless the local authority sold them the ground (to allow the two clubs to develop and commercialise the facility along British lines), and the similar arguments between Turin City Council and Juventus.
[290] Cheffins 1997
[291] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 47, page 5

the impact would nonetheless have been to create not just a community stadium, but also a commercial one, a view that traditionality (with its shrine, or 'home', mentality) would not necessarily be able to support, yet one in line with dominant market values. The context, of course, is vital, since without such developments, the viability of the whole project was threatened, so while SISA support for commercialism is more likely to be the product of pragmatism than a genuine belief, the effect is the same.

The overall impact would be a stadium that brings together a range of cultural traditions and demographic backgrounds within the game. Had SISA supported family stands and crèches but not terraces, they could legitimately have been categorised as located in the FAPL camp, but instead, the organisation operates with a pluralist agenda that stresses the rights of all supporters. Interestingly, unlike the FAPL conception of family football,[292] which is predicated on the exclusion of other elements of the crowd, the SISA view is entirely inclusive and sees no contradiction between family attendance at football and having those elements of the crowd re-housed within terraces. While not traditional, this is also fundamentally outside FAPL culture, and damages the latter more than traditionality, since traditional fans can ultimately ignore the presence of other supporters so long as it does not affect their presence or cultural space, and can indeed incorporate criticisms of those supporters into its own values (the 'sit down, you bums' chant directed at those leaving early). SISA's position is not pure traditionalism, but still resists central planks of FAPL culture, that damage in turn other elements of the project of profit maximisation, and locates SISA closer to the forms of traditionality even if not all the values historically involved in it.

SISA also made no mention of club bands (as found at Sheffield Wednesday, and suggested at other clubs, like Liverpool), cheerleaders or any of the other centralised attempts to change the match-day experience, despite their focus on families, and instead tend to start from the premise that it is fans who create the match-day atmosphere. Indeed there is some (limited)

[292] King 1997b

criticism of the modern practice of playing pop songs as the teams run out,[293] plus complaints about the lack of originality and spontaneity in the songs still heard. This clearly not only sits outside FAPL values and its construction of fans, but also strikes at the heart of attempts to shift football's class base, aligning SISA with working class values and forms of engagement with the game. Such a position rejects the 'leisure experience' paradigm underpinning club match-day entertainment, implicitly rejects the notion that the game has to be reshaped to suit new sets of supporters and constructs the ground as an independent cultural and social space to be preserved from centralised club control and direction: these are of course principles of traditionality.

The stress SISA place on the rights of female, minority and disabled supporters does of course break with traditionality (and contradicts academics like Taylor who see no progressive possibilities in terrace culture or those opposed to modern norms).[294] Straying onto FSA territory, this approach would create a stadium genuinely for the community in all its forms which, when combined with the concern over prices and the needs of the working fan, creates a highly inclusive and unconditional approach towards the crowd, outside both schools of fandom identified here. However in two ways, this model is closer to traditionality and working class norms than dominant norms; firstly, by the simple fact of seeking to ensure access to the ground for all, and secondly, by defending the view of fans as active independent participants. The group has explicitly argued for a 'Kop' at The Dell to generate atmosphere, the need for a separate part of the ground for those who want to sing and chant (for home and away fans),[295] and to re-segregate those who want to stand and sing, and those who prefer to sit and watch to avoid arguments between them.[296] It also (successfully) campaigned to have home fans re-located in the Archers Road End of The Dell, because the roof over that stand kept the noise in and so would improve the atmosphere. When combined with the fact that these are the fans who stand up during games, this demonstrates a clear stress on traditional

[293] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 47, page 12
[294] Taylor 1995
[295] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 41, page 10

values. The motivation is thus both to re-align the cultural space of sections of The Dell towards important elements of traditionality, and to re-assert certain cultural practices of traditionality within the stadium that the FAPL project seeks to eliminate.

Generally, SISA's position on the stadium is complex and touches both traditionality and FSA culture at different points, plus one or two half-hearted accommodations with FAPL culture, but their conception of the stadium in which different sorts of fans/spectators have the physical and cultural space to express themselves, is one that strikes at central planks of FAPL idea of football, with its limited, controlled and homogenised cultural spaces.

Contestation

There was generally a strong working class sense to SISA, with the 'feel' of the meetings, the group and its committee members very much that of ordinary working class fans seeking a hand in what goes on in 'their' game. The sense that football belongs to the supporters who invest their loyalty in the game, and particularly the ordinary fans who sustained it during its bleaker days, forms a strong conceptual undercurrent to much of what SISA do and the way that the group operates, which is a strong rejection of modern culture, and reaffirms some of the features of SISA that coincide with, or, indeed, represent traditionality. While there are obviously areas that do not exclusively fit traditional working class fandom, particularly the highly inclusive approach to crowd demography and the community aspects of the stadium, the sense of who SISA represents and its viewpoint on the nature of the club, the nature of support, and the shape and the nature of the stadium do firmly locate SISA somewhere between traditionality and the more respectable working class aspects of FSA culture, informed by both but in different ways. There is virtually nothing that accepts in full either the principles or practice of new football, and the furore SISA caused over the directors' shares (one of the most illuminating features of 'new football') indicates how central elements of the strategy of political, economic and

[296] *The Ugly Inside*, Issue 47, page 16

social transformation of football are resisted and rejected not just for their practical implications, but for the principles that inhere in them. The constant attempts to politicise the debate about SFC, SISA and the directors, and the political agenda inherent in anti-racism for instance, are also considerably outside FAPL culture, albeit that they do not belong in traditionality either. Generally speaking, there is little in SISA's activities that directly attacks traditionality, or the interests of what the group conceptualise as working class supporters.

Chapter Five - Leicester City and LCISA[297]

Leicester City (LCFC), like Southampton, have achieved much more in recent years than might have been expected given their size, turnover and supporter base. While the club has 'yo-yo'-ed between the top two divisions in the last fifteen years, it stabilised significantly under the chairmanship of Martin George and Tom Smeaton: victory in the Coca-Cola Cup in 1996-7 (their first success for 17 years) saw the club qualify for Europe for the first time in thirty years. Making a small operating profit of £1.52m in 1997,[298] Leicester were rarely able to spend much on players or wages until 1998: prior to that season, their transfer record was £1.6m for Matt Elliott (which is tiny compared to the money spent by the FAPL's biggest clubs), and instead often had to sell their best players. This was partly due to the small maximum capacity at their Filbert Street ground, with attendances averaging 20,184 in 1996-97.[299]

However, the last two years have seen a revolution off the pitch, with Leicester the first club to be strategically targeted by quoted shell Soccer Investments, into which it reversed in July 1997. The stock market floatation in October 1997 valued City at around £25m and raised £10m for a variety of projects; the following summer, City decided to leave Filbert Street for a new 40,000 capacity stadium, ready for August 2000. Generally City has a reputation is known as a well-run club that could teach some bigger outfits many lessons about organisation, marketing and community relations. However despite its recently discovered strength and solid league performances, the club remains relatively small in the context of the FAPL, and its long-term future is as yet unclear, likely to be dependent on developments like the new ground.

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[297] The fieldwork for this chapter was carried out in 1997 and 1998, with attendance at the AGM in July 1997, when the majority of the questionnaires were collected, and the interview conducted with senior committee member and founder Andy Buckingham in spring 1998.
[298] Deloitte and Touché 1998, page 19
[299] ibid., page 18

LCISA (Leicester City Independent Supporters Association)[300]

Since it was created as the Northampton Branch of the Leicester City Supporters' Club in 1993-94 (so betraying obvious NFFSC traditions), LCISA may seem to fit somewhat uneasily with the other groups studied here. However, the group essentially operated as an ISA for four years, and attended national meetings as an ISA, until in July 1998 it resigned from the SC and disbanded, reforming itself as an 'official' ISA. Through its activities over the years, LCISA has been able to carve out a role for itself, becoming the primary fan organisation that LCFC deal with, and indeed one that LCFC appears to respect. Their reorganisation into a formal ISA in 1998, with a remit to "voice the opinions of the fans to the Football Club and to the media",[301] highlights the conceptual and paradigmatic distance between them and traditional SCs: indeed, the refusal of the latter to move beyond traditional NFFSC-defined roles and relations with the club was the motivation for the split,[302] justifying the inclusion of LCISA in this research. It was also deemed important to consider Leicester, since it has many features unique and interesting in the top division, it does not buy fully into FAPL culture, and more generally represents a tranche of clubs whose ambitions were previously heavily restricted by their size. Hence the club offers a good case-study of the issues at the heart of football's cultural and financial revolution.

It is clear that LCISA was not formed as a response to cultural transformation, and that there was no politically-based agenda or set of events that sparked its creation. The motivation for Lance Tomlyn and Andy Buckingham to found LCISA was to turn LCFC's attention to the needs of Leicester fans in and around Northampton, and to get better access to tickets for home games: this was a central motivation in the decision to form LCISA, as the distance between Leicester and Northampton made it hard for fans to obtain home tickets. LCISA posted flyers under the windscreen wipers of cars that sported Leicester badges to advertise the group, which made no

[300] Although originally an offshoot of the Supporters' Club, for clarity, the group will be called LCISA throughout this chapter.
[301] LCISA Press Release, 'Independence Day', July 1998

mention of any elements of transformation at Leicester City to spark any fan opposition. As Buckingham noted, the objective was "to bring supporters of Leicester City Football Club in this area together, so we could meet, talk about football and gain the advantages of being a group; so that we would have a voice with the club, if we could go to the club, and say that we represent 200 people living in this area, don't forget about us when it comes to organising things." Clearly, there was no outrage at transformation, or issues of exclusion that sparked LCISA into life, or that convinced fans to become members.

Indeed, the fact that LCISA was advertised not just by Leicester fanzines, but also by an advert in the club match-day programme, speaks volumes as to the context in which the decision to start the branch was taken. Instead of any significant fan revolt, everything that the branch offered as a reason for joining lay squarely within NFFSC traditions. The full list of advantages on an early membership flyer comprised: Tickets and Travel, Meetings, Special Events (sports dinners, race nights, quiz nights etc), Newsletters, 5-a-side football, promotional items and discounts at various shops. The context this suggests, and the motivations offered for joining the group, are clearly not a response to transformation, and draw instead on a desire for social interaction with other Leicester fans, and a desire for the club to prioritise more the needs of its fans around Northampton. Even the later transformation into an ISA in 1998 did not highlight cultural issues that were of concern to the members, but stressed nearly all the issues and values that had gone into the original flyer in 1993, with the additional suggestion that LCISA is "your voice to the club".[303] Moreover, at the time of the group's formation, the team was performing well under Brian Little, chairman Martin George was operating an open door policy with regard to supporters, and there was a general air of (relative) success about City, so this cannot even be seen as a BIFA or SISA-style reaction against team decline.

[302] LCISA article in *The Fox*, Issue 80, page 24
[303] LCISA 'Join Up Now' Flyer, 1998

Interestingly, Buckingham notes a very different fan group formed in the late 1980s, that *was* born out of the frustrations generated by a chairman and board that appeared happy to accept mediocrity and relegation from the top division as all that could be expected from a club of Leicester's size. The group, Ambitious Leicester Fans, were faced with a different chairman, Len Shipman, who steadfastly refused to talk to it or any other group, at a time when Leicester were neither progressive nor apparently ambitious, and when communication with fans had declined to the point that fanzine sellers were chased off club premises. But even these fans seemed primarily concerned with matters on the pitch (Leicester's failure to win an away match for over 15 months, for instance) and the level of investment and ambition of the chairman and board of directors, rather than anything more directly political or cultural.

The themes noted on the LCISA flyer correlate closely with the views of members; of the fifteen fans present at the Annual General Meeting in 1997, the centrality of tickets and the local nature of the group were very clearly the two reasons why members joined: nine joined in the hope of getting easier access to tickets, while another four members were attracted by the group's local Northampton-base. Only one was concerned with anything that can be classed as a desire for representation or an input into LCFC's decision-making process. As Buckingham noted, the intentions were to get the club "to come and speak to us, to listen to what we've got to say. At the same time, we wanted to create some kind of network, some kind of bond between the supporters in this area, for spreading of information, so that they knew where they stood, for organising travel as best we could, to pair people up [for] shared lifts to games, and more so to obtain tickets." A combination of a desire to see City develop its ambitions and secure its future, and to have some input into that process, can be seen as the primary driving forces behind the creation of the group. "There was nothing like [the West Ham bond scheme] happening around the time we formed, it was really a case of 'we've arrived in the FAPL, we obviously want to stay there, we have something to say, we believe we could form a supporters club in this locality to try and get something done".

But clearly for the members, LCISA's ticketing system was the primary concern, as witnessed by the fact that some members live nowhere near Northampton, but use their membership to ensure access to match tickets, like one "in Colchester [who has] signed up half a dozen over there. Basically they have used our Supporters Club to get tickets and organise transport." These themes are reflected in LCISA's membership, which has grown steadily and seemingly independent of events at City, rising from 100 odd a few months after formation to nearly 200 by the end of season 1997-98. The fact that membership levels were hardly affected by either City's relegation from the FAPL in season 1994-5 or its success in 1996-7 indicates the different cultural dynamic of LCISA (at least in its earlier guise) compared to the other ISAs analysed here.

Again, the validity of analysing LCISA may not be immediately obvious, but as discussed below, LCISA increasingly took on weightier, genuinely 'political' issues, and undoubtedly became the key fan group at Leicester, probably indeed beyond what can be justified by its size and membership (a point Buckingham openly conceded).

Demography of LCISA and attitudes towards crowd demography

There are certain features of LCISA's demographic profile that fit the other ISAs analysed here, also found in its attitudes towards the changing crowd. Once more very heavily male in nature, LCISA's membership of 200 is populated, broadly speaking, by fans in their late 20s, with few younger fans. Buckingham suggested that LCISA's female membership numbers no more than a dozen, and more importantly, only one can be called genuinely active in her contributions to the work of the group (she was a part of LCISA's delegation to the Taskforce, for instance). It is maybe significant that she was a post-graduate student. Generally, Buckingham noted that "when we went to Manchester United... out of 45 people, there was probably about seven women on that coach, I would say, a very low percentage." At the AGM attended in 1997, none of the fifteen members was female, raising the twin issues of low female representation and even lower female activism, within

the general context of what was another relatively low-activism organisation. Equally, only one of those present appeared to be under 30, an age group that Buckingham identifies as lacking in LCISA in general, with most members grouped somewhere between the 30-45 age range: he also noted a total lack of teenagers, as also found in SISA and BIFA.

There was additionally no diversity in racial backgrounds, with Buckingham suggesting only two Asian and black members out of the 200 total. Although the Asian member, Rav, was appointed onto the committee in 1998 (the *only* minority fan on any of the committees analysed in this research), and LCISA take a strong and active stance on anti-racism (discussed below), in terms of membership, minority members were very scarce. Buckingham attributed this to the fact that Northampton lacks large minority population, before noting in fact that the large Asian population in Leicester was one that LCISA targeted as part of its membership drive post-disaffiliation from the SC in 1998. LCISA also included a commitment to eliminate racism in its Fans' Charter, demonstrating a support for minority supporters and their rights, even if the group itself had been unable to attract minority members. The social backgrounds described by Buckingham again suggest a broad and inclusive group that combines not so much people of a social class (perceived or real), but simply people who support Leicester City: "a mixture of professional people: at the start, probably 50%, the bulk, being professional or semi-professional people... reps, accountants... 20% more manual jobs..., and a good educational spread, politically a mix as well." The two central members of the group (Buckingham and Tomlyn) themselves had professional backgrounds, one working as a tax inspector and the other running his own service-sector company.

There was also, it seemed, a strong family element to LCISA, with Buckingham suggesting that upwards of 20% of the members attend games in a family context, and the popularity of family attendance at Filbert Street in general seemed to penetrate the group to the point where, (as discussed below), LCISA's plan for the new Bede Island ground included shallow terracing for family groups. LCISA also support and advertise Family Nights

at Filbert Street, as well as supporting the presence of female supporters, children and essentially any other group of supporters who wanted to watch Leicester City. Once more, there is no opposition within LCISA to change within the modern crowd, reducing therefore the extent of genuine traditionality within LCISA's norms. The only exception to this, and the prime way in which LCISA did connect more with traditionality, was (as with the other groups here), the lack of empathy for or recognition of corporate spectators, with Buckingham constructing a dichotomy between corporate guests and what he called "the genuine fans".

This distinction, between those who attend out of a love for the game or Leicester City and those who attend for business reasons (that is, using the football for other purposes unconnected to the club or game) is in opposition to modern values, but even opposition to the corporate sector was relative at heart, and depended on the scale of the tickets made available to such spectators: LCISA took the view, as Buckingham put it, that "if we moved to a new stadium and we are looking at 40,000 [capacity], and we decided to give 1,000 to corporate hospitality, so be it, I think we can stand that", but giving that scale of tickets to corporate sponsors at Filbert Street with its restricted capacity would not be acceptable. Hence, once more, it was the operation of the ticketing system, and the trade-off in interests between elements of the crowd, that formed the point of contention and resistance (rather than any maximalist opposition): where the interests of 'real' fans were not damaged by the attention paid to sponsors or corporate spectators, then essentially it was not an issue. Buckingham noted that "it's something [the club] have to do to compete" and that "the only time we have become really worried about the number of tickets being passed out on a corporate basis was the Madrid trip. All of a sudden we seemed to lose about 700 tickets from what was supposed to be available to fans, and the feeling was that quite a few tickets were on more corporate packages." LCISA's Taskforce submission noted the need to keep a close check on the numbers of tickets passed to sponsors and other interested parties, for home and away games,[304] and the Bede

[304] LCISA Taskforce submission, 1998, page 1

Island discussion document supported corporate facilities "but not at the detriment [sic] of ensuring all other fans have excellent facilities?".[305]

However, the view that sponsors have a right to tickets and that such procedures are inevitably essential to the club's ability to compete are dominant notions that LCISA in principle accepted: "if they [sponsors] are prepared to put in £2,000 or £3,000 individually compared to what a season ticket costs at £400, perhaps they are entitled to a ticket." Even though the dichotomization between real supporters and the corporate element does reject modern norms, operates with a different traditional perspective of the social and cultural meaning and purpose of a club, and suggests a desire for the club to focus its interest and operations on those fans who draw an identity from (and offer a loyalty to) Leicester City, LCISA's perspective conceded in principle the invasion of the modern game by corporate interest. However side-by-side with this has to be set LCISA's opposition to the developing manipulation of the fixture list by Sky (especially once PPV is available) on the grounds that clubs should fore-ground the interests of active attendees over the TV audience,[306] a position that is clearly out of step with all the dominant values of the industry, and its most lucrative operations. This does however also detach LCISA from the *modern* ambit of traditionality in the sense that the TV audience will increasingly come to include those who cannot afford entry.

Of the members at the AGM, 11 of 14 were ex-terrace fans, all 10 who answered the question felt that LCISA represented traditional working class fans and concepts of fan behaviour, and the sample split 9-2 in favour of LCISA *aiming* to represent those values. Within this, the issue of social exclusion within the Filbert Street crowd was complicated (as at Southampton) by the ground's heavily restrictive capacity, creating a situation where not even all Leicester City's members could expect a ticket for every match, let alone those constituencies within the crowd who could not afford a season ticket. Once more, this masks the nature of change within the club's

[305] *The Fox*, Issue 80, page 29
[306] LCISA article in *The Fox*, Issue 80, page 29

active fanbase, patterns of change that will only become genuinely apparent after the move to Bede Island; but whatever the nature of social exclusion at a club whose tickets are relatively cheap by FAPL standards, it is clear that given the preponderance of season ticket holders within LCISA (50% of the members, according to Buckingham, a figure to some extent confirmed by the ease with which the group can arrange tickets for non-season ticket holding members), it is not a haven for fans who can no longer afford tickets. Buckingham suggests that a few members were in this position, and that they used the pooling system for tickets to gain entry to games, but there is little sense in which LCISA acts as a site for those excluded in the most fundamental way to seek 'redress' or representation within football. Indeed, while on the one hand, LCISA's version of the Fans' Charter (discussed below) did ask LCFC to "ensure that prices at the club are kept to bare levels so that the club remains open to all and not just the elite, and especially to juniors who will form the backbone of the club's support in the future", and the group raised escalating ticket prices in its Taskforce submission,[307] and supported terraces to allow prices to come down,[308] there was also a clause in the Charter urging LCFC to "give back benefits when possible to those who financially support the club upfront i.e. season ticket holders". To this extent, not only was LCISA not filled by those fans without the means to attend regularly, but it also operated from the premise that supporters able to pay the lump sum for season tickets deserve privileges over the rest of the Filbert Street crowd, as also seen in the club's creation of a Season Ticket Holders' working party that LCISA contribute to. Despite the element of redistribution involved in the pooling of the season tickets available for away games, LCISA was clearly not the preserve of the financially excluded, and overall, their generally inclusive approach towards the crowd demography highlights a substantial degree of acceptance of modern mores, and of the social changes at the heart of the transformation of football in the 1990s. However, there was also a recognition of the class based project of the FAPL, with eleven of the fifteen AGM attendees agreeing with the view that the FAPL is an attempt to make football a middle-class sport.

[307] LCISA Taskforce submission, 1998, page 3
[308] *The Fox*, Issue 80, page 29

The meeting itself was essentially a classic FSA (or more generally, classic pressure group) affair, with a set agenda, reports from officers to the members, full financial reports and a copy of the accounts for all who wanted it, elections for officers for the following year, and some discussion of topical events around the team, followed by sandwiches and drinks. It was essentially a non-controversial 'quiet' event, with little debate, and the main focus of the meeting was on arranging tickets for forthcoming pre-season friendlies, and on social interaction that would not have been out of place in any pub discussion. Indeed, Buckingham notes that the most successful events LCISA organised were of the classic NFFSC social nature, involving talks and question-and-answer sessions with the City team manager, local football characters (like referees, fanzine editors, local journalists etc), ex-players or Leicester City management. The social side of the club also included other elements of NFFSC traditions, notably player of the year awards, sports dinners with ex-players (like Frank Worthington) and testimonial dinners (for captain Steve Walsh).

These essentially de-politicised social meetings, in the tradition of the NFFSC, tended to alternate with 'normal' meetings held by the ISA, where the issues around City were discussed and where feedback to and from the club (via their regular Fans' Forums) or the FSA was generated. It is revealing that Buckingham suggested that more members were expected at the social meetings than at normal meetings, unless the latter dealt with a particularly weighty issue like the new ground: "the move to the new stadium is going to be of huge interest to all our members and if we have any meeting relevant to that, we will get a lot in. If we just said 'if you just want to come along for a general chat', we'd probably get the hard-core of about 20 there." This reinforces the view that the group was in no sense a response to transformation, nor a defence of any school of fandom in the face of that transformation, and operates as much at a social level, the opportunity to create social relations through membership of the group and attendance at meeting and events, rather than at a political or representative level. On the basis of their everyday operation, and the primary points of interaction

between members and the group (tickets and travel), LCISA were clearly not defending any genuine cultural positions, and their main dynamic was essentially one of interaction at a social level with members not mainly motivated by political or issue-based campaigning. This suggests that if the members were rebels or resisting the project of the modern sport, through the actual campaigning work that LCISA engaged in, they did so with a certain degree of reluctance.

The motivations of the members present at the AGM for joining LCISA reveal much about this dynamic: of the fifteen, only one joined out of a desire for fans to have some representation with the club, whereas nine were primarily interested in LCISA's avowed capacity for obtaining scarce match tickets, and the other four wanted to interact socially with other local Northampton-based City fans. Equally, only one has ever been a member of the FSA, and of the rest, five explicitly preferred LCISA's club-centric nature. Buckingham summed up the attitude of the group thus: "a fairly high proportion, maybe not the majority, of our people... [are only] interested in being able to go to Filbert Street and get tickets to watch the games. The wider perspective does not interest them unless they can see it immediately affecting them... I bet if you went to half our membership and said 'FSA', they would not know what you were talking about." However, while there is a visibly Leicester-centric core to the group, five of the fifteen members did express concerns about the way that the lower divisions are being financially cut adrift from the FAPL, and how the flow of money is excessively slanted towards the latter, a view that fundamentally denies the Thatcherite premises of the FAPL and Sky,[309] and that does suggest some interest in matters non-Leicester. However, while such attitudes may exist, these were not translated into active campaigning work, the vast majority of the work the ISA has involved itself with is Leicester-based, and the non-Leicester work of LCISA depends almost entirely on the activities, and activism, of Buckingham as an individual, rather than drawing upon any great groundswell of opinion from the members.

[309] King 1998

Generally LCISA is clearly neither the politicised edge of fandom, nor the preserve of excluded working class fans angered or embittered by the elimination of their social space inside the ground or their financial exclusion from the game. Interestingly, and significantly, the only member who has ever joined the FSA, Buckingham, was also the group's liaison officer (with both other ISAs and the FSA), was number two within LCISA and one of its most active members. However, while the members may not have been seeking representation when they joined the group and were motivated by a desire to obtain elusive match-day tickets, once inside it, their views on it seemed to have changed to some extent: everyone who answered the question on what the ISA can achieve mentioned some form of representation, providing fans with a voice, or creating a link between the supporters and the board.

This does not seem to fit very comfortably or logically with the members' stated objectives in joining in the first place, unless the motivations for people joining the group as individuals and what they consider the role of the group to be are fundamentally different, and born out of diverse contexts. Hence the active members believed that LCISA should be seeking to intervene in the decision-making process, which, as argued previously, does fragment the cultural and economic logic of FAPL values, particularly at a club like Leicester that has floated on the stock market: yet this objective was not in itself a motivation for members to join, and they were content essentially to take a back seat in the group's attempts to carve out a role for itself in LCFC's decision-making process. There is thus a fundamental disjunction between the objectives of the members and of the leadership, with clear implications for the extent to which LCISA can be seen as a response to cultural change. For the members, LCISA 'means' something different than to the committee or the leaders, who view it as an active campaigning organisation that exists to put forward the views of fans to the club, and offer representation for supporters in the decision-making process: the members clearly have a far less engaged relationship with LCISA, and have much more straightforward instrumental objectives in joining it. This is also clear from the extent to which the members participate, and the sort of work they

do: only two of the members (apart from the three central figures) did anything within the organisation other than attend meetings: this suggests that basically instrumental objectives like obtaining tickets and arranging travel to games, plus social interaction with like-minded Leicester fans, were of considerably greater significance to them.

Structure and Activities

The lack of any culturally-rooted problems of transformation at Leicester City is also clear from the activities the group carries out, and the operations it concerns itself with. Throughout the group, there is a divide (visible at other groups as well) between the activism and dynamism of the leadership or committee, and the more detached approach of the membership. This is reflected not just in the relatively low turnout for the AGM in 1997, but also in the reliance of the group on two or three individuals for the dynamism and campaigning edge to its activities. Buckingham notes that there has never been an election for any of the key positions in the group, and that most of the administrative, financial and liaison responsibilities within the group fall squarely on three key individuals. Indeed, his suggestion that much of LCISA's work would decline or disappear altogether were it not for those key individuals (notably liaison with other groups) does suggest a divide in both the preparedness to contribute and the worldview between members and committee, and that modern supporter groups, like those of past generations and also pressure groups more generally, remain highly dependent on the activism of a small minority, with the vision to see past the narrow confines of their own club and fans, with clear implications for the genuine cultural significance that can be attributed to ISAs within wider terms within football.

Most of LCISA's operations, certainly in the past, cannot genuinely be called campaigning, and the NFFSC-style roots were often clear: the main focus, certainly it would seem for the rank-and-file membership, is the allocation of tickets. As noted above, Northampton-based Leicester fans faced the twin problems of Filbert Street's limited capacity and their own distance from Leicester, and hence getting home and away tickets was in many cases the first priority. This is done directly from the club, and revolves around the

communal pooling of priority cards, a system that means that most members who want an away ticket can obtain one. This is one of the club's most attractive selling points to prospective members, seems to take up much of the time of the group, and certainly was one of the most important issues raised at the AGM.

As with the other groups, the ISA are once more in the realms of revenue maximisation, heavily dependent on their own membership fees for income (over 46% of their total revenue) and their ability to raise funds themselves. The financial scale of LCISA was very small, with income for the year to 31 May 1997 totalling £2376, generating a surplus of £572.[310] The sources of these funds fit once more with the NFFSC-style social club, such as quiz, skittle and golf nights, scratch cards, running coaches to international matches, selling car stickers and Christmas cards, brewery trips, club leisurewear (caps, T-shirts, sweatshirts, badges and car stickers), five-a-side football and fantasy football leagues. Significant additional funds are raised via a levy on the match tickets that the club buys, which generated over 30% of the club's total revenue in 1997. LCISA were thus very much within the same territory as the other ISAs discussed here, essentially small-scale, with officers unpaid save for expenses, and dependent on the funds they can raise themselves in order to sustain their activities.

Externally, LCISA again operated within the standard paradigms uncovered here, relying on the usual FSA tactics to attract attention and interest where applicable and to gain access to the club. Since it did not start out as a campaigning organisation, there was never an issue over how to approach LCFC, whether to seek meetings with the directors or to make sufficient noise from the outside to force the club to meet with them. Since there was no natural antagonism between LCISA and LCFC, the directors were quickly invited to come and talk to the members as guest speakers. There was therefore, by definition, a civility and respect for the rules of polite behaviour inherently built into the operations of LCISA, operating very much on the

[310] LCISA end of year club accounts, to 31 May 1997

basis of writing letters, liasing with other supporter groups, holding regular meetings with the club, attending the Fans' Forums organised by the club, making submissions to the Taskforce when it visited Leicester, using friendly journalists and contacts inside the club to gather and spread information, and subscribing to the FSA and urging members to lobby the local council in support of the Bede Island project. Once again, there was a strong focus on respectable campaigning, born no doubt of the specific demographics of the group, and its roots within an NFFSC-inspired social club. Equally, the guest speakers at meetings have often been people from LCFC, including ex-chairmen Tom Smeaton and Martin George, managing director Barrie Pierpoint and other high ranking personnel, and relations with the club were generally close enough for the football club to ask LCISA to advertise open days at Filbert Street.[311] This is enhanced by the fact that LCISA generated (and wished to maintain) close links with the club's ticket office, and were generally seeking some form of leverage with the club, reinforcing the need for responsible campaigning and actions. This extended to condemnation from LCISA of a section of Leicester fans who had taken to throwing coins at away supporters in 1998 and 1999, which highlights the civilised approach to campaigning and the game that LCISA embody.

This was no doubt borne out of the family and professional backgrounds of many of the members and the officers of the club, and of the social origins of the club. The other tactics were equally civilised, particularly the regular use of the main City fanzine, *The Fox*, to get articles printed and generate feedback, plus liasing with members via newsletters and surveys of fan opinion, and since LCISA's genuinely campaigning side was still developing, then both the need and the scope for more assertive or aggressive tactics were essentially eliminated. Equally, the fact that Leicester City operate a very open policy towards supporters and consult regularly with them (albeit, of course, on the issues that they choose to discuss) would make it problematic for LCISA to move to a more aggressive approach anyway. In general, their mode of campaigning is entirely consistent with the FSA modes

[311] reported AGM 1997

of operation, gathering the opinions of fans, seeking consultation with clubs and other relevant bodies via informal and formalised means, and wishing to be viewed ultimately as a central part of the decision-making process.

The Stadium

The main campaigning work that LCISA did involve themselves in concern a relatively limited set of issues, notably from summer 1998 the move to a new 40,000 capacity stadium at Bede Island South. The projected timetable for opening the ground was put back until August 2000 in July 1998, as the club wanted "to allow for effective public consultation",[312] and the plan received confirmation from Leicester City Council in February 1999. The Bede Island project will include a four-storey hotel, a casino/restaurant, fast food outlets and non-food retail complex.[313] All fans seemed to agree that City should move, with Filbert Street seen as offering neither the capacity nor the facilities currently expected of a top division side. There were also suggestions that the costs of purchasing the land needed to redevelop Filbert Street would be prohibitive, and that the money would be better spent on facilities at a new site. There is thus no sense in which nostalgia for the past ties the fans down to the *status quo*, and hence the reality of the need to expand the capacity available to Leicester City overrode any affective ties to current arrangements, such as these were. This represents an acceptance of the highly pervasive FAPL paradigm of 'modernisation', and essentially locates LCISA within dominant discourses. Certainly the notion that the club had to move in order to generate the extra revenue needed to stay in the top division underpins LCISA's view of the proposed move.[314]

The stadium that Buckingham outlines as the group's blueprint reveals much about their culture as an ISA and their relationship with dominant culture. LCISA's design was, similarly to SISA's, for a genuine community-based stadium that combined commercial developments with a range of accessible

[312] Reported on the Leicester City website, July 15 1998; *http://www.lcfc.co.uk/980715c.htm*
[313] Reported on the Leicester City website, Jan 6 1999; *http://www.lcfc.co.uk/news/january/990106d.htm*
[314] Unfortunately, the fieldwork for this chapter was already nearly completed when the notion of leaving Filbert Street was first mooted, hence the absence of any detailed data on

cultural spaces for different types of supporter and supporter traditions, and that acted as a real part of the community. Buckingham's blueprint also included some interesting attempts to create genuine multi-cultural spaces within the facility that would reflect not just the diversity of Leicester life, but also a clear commitment to anti-racist practice by the club and its supporters. This image is therefore in some ways rather detached from many of the values inherent in FAPL culture, although LCISA's acceptance of the commercialisation of the stadium does again bring them back within dominant norms.

The first feature LCISA insist upon is that the stadium is, and remain, first and foremost, a football ground, and that other commercial developments or activities must remain sub-ordinate to that. Leicester's intention was to use the stadium for commercial purposes during the week, or on non match-day weekends, and there was essentially no opposition amongst the group to that idea (apart from a concern with the quality of the pitch)[315] or the notion that the ground should be commercialised. More importantly, one of the diversified features of the ground that LCISA focus heavily on was access for the local community, and the notion that the ground should genuinely be part of the community was central to much of LCISA's view of the new development. One LCISA article agreed for instance with the choice of Bede Island as the location for the new ground because of its proximity to Filbert Street and so its effects on the locality previously served by that facility: "Without the football club on its doorstep many of the small businesses serving the local community around Filbert Street would not survive."[316] There was a preference for the ground to sustain its local community and for LCFC to ignore the example of Bolton in departing for a greenfield site a considerable distance from the town centre. Equally, within that community around the stadium, LCISA supported the notion of formalised access for local schools and notably for Asian community groups, as part of the wider process of recreating the relationship between the club and the 30%+ of

what the membership feel about what features should be incorporated into Bede Island.
[315] *The Fox*, Issue 80, page 29
[316] *The Fox*, Issue 80, page 28

Leicester's population with an Asian background. The failure of Bolton's ground to serve the community, either in terms of sustaining shops and businesses or in terms of local access, was one major drawback identified by LCISA's research into new British stadia, plus the distance from the town centre.[317] Such a conceptualisation of the stadium is also outside the market discourses that have inspired some of the major ground moves of the 1990s, and re-conceptualises the club in a way that, while not unwelcome to Leicester City themselves, is clearly no longer a norm that top division football clubs wish to carry with them.

Other design features included a full concourse to stretch around the ground (to house commercial and service facilities for supporters, like food areas for instance), specific features designed to mean that "everyone (young, old, disabled) will be able to enjoy the facilities"[318] crèche facilities and other children/family oriented facilities plus corporate hospitality. There were clearly elements here that reject traditionality in fundamental ways, notably the development of important parts of the stadium as family spaces. There was also the issue of how the traditional notion of the stadium *in toto*, as 'home', or a quasi-religious shrine (as seen at Anfield post-Hillsborough and subsequently each year, at West Ham after the death of Bobby Moore in 1993, and at Old Trafford each year on the anniversary of Munich) fitted in with the commercialisation of the new ground, and since it appears not to do so, this is another element where LCISA reject traditionality, particularly through LCISA's idea that the stadium should feature franchised high street food outlets such as McDonald's within the concourse. One of the central planks of the transformation of football, the commercialisation of the stadium, was broadly speaking accepted, involving both the creation of diversified profit-maximising operations within the ground, and its development as a commercial space itself, to be used for whatever purposes would generate funds for the club.

[317] Stadium relocation research produced by Andy Buckingham, 1998, page 1
[318] *The Fox*, Issue 80, page 29

Within that context of commercial development however was an interesting and radical idea Buckingham put to the 1998 Fans' Forum, that if LCFC intended to offer franchises for food outlets in the ground, invitations to tender should be sent out to Indian and Asian restaurants, with the objective of, as he put it, to "getting some real Asian food served at the ground"'. While there are of course commercial opportunities to be gained from such a move, which clearly the club are aware of, or anti-racism in general, the engagedness and political awareness of this suggestion, and the view of the ground that underpins it, is significantly beyond FAPL culture, with its increasingly rapid and deep disconnections between club and community. The notion that spaces in the stadium be symbolically and physically opened to different sections of the local community, or that the ground is in some way representative of all, is too controversial and charged for the FAPL's apolitical commodified culture, and involves clubs in delicate debates about discrimination, representation and cultural space that they are loath to be drawn into. Again, this constructs the stadium as a genuine element of the community, not as a commercial facility to be sited and constructed in whatever ways appeal most to new middle class spectators. The intention to re-develop the cultural spaces within the stadium to systemically include minority populations and traditions, and allow for the expression of those traditions, is indicative of an (innovative) conception of the stadium that sits uncomfortably with dominant notions.

Such an idea does however, of course, also represent a deep rejection of traditionality, and extends even the normal boundaries of the FSA's line on anti-racism, whereby the racial space of the ground, uniformly white, previously working class but increasingly middle class in nature, is to be imbued with a genuine element of racial diversity. To traditionality, with its overwhelming white focus, the reconstruction of the stadium as a visibly racially-aware and conscious arena that highlights and positively celebrates racial diversity is a fundamental rejection, and is certainly even a step further than embodied in the anti-racist practices constructed by terrace culture from the early 1990s onwards as it transformed itself in the wake of the Hillsborough disaster (of shouting down racist supporters in the ground, and

organising anti-racist and anti-fascist groups).[319] There have been reports in the Leicester fanzine *The Fox* of home supporters shouting down Leeds fans indulging in racist chanting at a game at Filbert Street, which together with the existence of an anti-racist fan group with its own fanzine (*When You're Smiling*) suggests that City fans, maybe by nature of the mix in its population, are generally racially aware, a tradition that LCISA both draw upon and significantly extend (discussed further below).

Buckingham also suggested that LCISA would support the installation of video screens at Bede Island (as at Arsenal) visible from all parts of the ground, expect minimum standards of spectator comfort and quality within the stadium (on issues like leg-space and seat size), and would divide the ground into different spaces, so that diverse traditions of supporters know what they are allowed to do in certain areas and what they will find there, plus establishing secure undercover parking for bikes and motorcycles, and park-and-ride schemes to the ground. This does create an unclear picture in relation to the two schools of fandom hypothesised here: the division of the ground into culturally heterogeneous spaces does accept the diverse traditions of supporterdom, and accepts the premise that they are equally valid and should be protected, allowing the stadium to become a site for simultaneous heterogeneous cultural spaces: this was, of course, the norm prior to the all-seater requirements of 1994, and concurs with a central plank of traditionality, that they have the right to express themselves, and should have the space to do so. Buckingham's notion of the culturally differentiated stadium centrally involves unreserved areas of seating,[320] to facilitate the creation, by fans, of atmosphere, what Buckingham called "the cauldron effect". There was no mention of the pre-match and half-time entertainment recommended by the FAPL[321] and instead the generation of atmosphere was deemed the responsibility and right of the fans. Unreserved seating not only allows for this, and fits traditionality, but it is also further inimical to the consumer mentality of the FAPL, sitting uncomfortably with the consumer

[319] Redhead 1991
[320] A recommendation also made in a discussion document in *The Fox*, Issue 80
[321] FAPL 1997

rights discourse of the new spectator base, and modern operations of the notion of progress and modernisation. The more chaotic, less ordered, less 'secure' notion of unreserved seating, while already in existence at Filbert Street does fit the sense of *jouissance* postulated by Giulianotti and Armstrong, and hence is neither part of, nor helpful, to the modern project of creating controlled and directed *plaisir*.[322] This became an active issue at Filbert Street in 1999 as well, when the club sought to eliminate the practice in seats next to the away fans (following disturbances): LCISA argued strongly in the Fans' Forum that unreserved sections were important and should be retained, both at Filbert Street and in the future at Bede Island.

Another radical design feature LCISA raised repeatedly was to make either the entire new ground or sections of it non-smoking. While neither the rationale for, nor significance of, this was never fully explained, it was raised at the AGM, in articles in *The Fox*, and in the Taskforce submission, and while it is obviously futile to seek to locate non-smoking/smoking to class, it is hard to envisage circumstances in which traditionality would even consider such an idea, let alone propose it as part of a new stadium. This fits the image of a respectable middle-class organisation with respectable middle-class concerns, and certainly moves LCISA further from traditionality and working class norms. It is equally hard however to see how this notion can connect with modern capitalist norms and the fact that few clubs have non-smoking areas suggests that the consumer mentality at the heart of football's transformation would exclude such an idea.

The notion of installing video screens does however clearly contribute to football's capital project, offering obvious possibilities for selling extra advertising space and generating greater sponsorship revenue, for advertising club merchandise and hospitality and conferencing etc. It also accepts the central logic of the FAPL, the consumer logic, with the need to 'improve' standards and facilities, which will attract custom now instead of the game itself, the ritual of attendance or the social practices bound up in it. The

[322] Armstrong and Giulianotti (1997) Eds., introduction

recreation of the ground as a commercial space, another logical consequence of having video screens, is equally central to the modern dominant project of the game, and hence LCISA firmly buy into some fundamental elements of the transformation of modern football.

Merchandise

One of the most noticeable innovations at City is the fact that the club's kit is made in-house, under the *Fox Leisure* label, rather than a multinational kit manufacturer. This creates an interesting background for the issue of merchandise and kit design, since the club are clearly responsible for whatever is produced, and hence subject to direct pressure from fans. Buckingham reports that how Leicester "haven't got the likes of Adidas, Puma or anybody like that taking a cut [of the kit], so we feel a lot better about that". Just like the other groups here, LCISA had a 'traditional' design they wanted to see protected, namely blue shirts, white shorts and blue socks, a combination that they wanted the club to stick to: as Buckingham put it, "we don't want any kind of deviation from that, apart from genuine away strips, that's what we play in". This was taken to the point where the red corporate logo of sponsors Walkers' became a problem for the fans in 1996-7, who opposed the presence of red on the home shirt, and where the introduction of blue shorts by the club was opposed and ultimately reversed. While this may seem to offer only limited resistance to the principle of commercialisation of football, it still represents a particular re-definition of the nature of the club, in that for such fans it becomes a genuine cultural space with rituals and symbols with real meanings, none of which can be easily altered, certainly not for commercial motives. The principle of merchandising may be accepted, but the construction of the nature of the club it involves is fundamentally different from that City themselves operate with, where all its features become open to commercial exploitation, and the 'need to compete' can over-ride everything else.

But, as at the other ISAs here, the principle of merchandising was accepted, and the watch-words were quality and affordability. The position on kit and merchandise was clearly mediated by the fact that the kit was amongst the

cheapest in the FAPL and considered to be good quality, and crucially that all the profits made from it went into the club: this consideration (the use the revenue raised was put to) seemed to fundamentally shape the group's attitude towards merchandise, and as long as the funds generated were put into the football side of the club's operations, then LCISA were essentially happy. Indeed, the fact that LCISA negotiated discounts on Leicester City merchandise for its members, and offered this as a reason to join LCISA in the first place, confirms that these operations are not in themselves problematic.

What is also obvious is how City's restricted capacity (and hence gate revenues) shape the attitudes of fans and how the club's need to generate extra revenue (to make up the shortfall on gate receipts compared with other FAPL clubs) makes it difficult to adopt hard positions on issues like merchandise, albeit with the usual FSA/consumer caveats on quality and cost. What can be described as a collision between principle and cold reality leads to an acceptance of the modern diversification in football, including all manner of souvenirs and other merchandise. There were certainly no objections amongst the fifteen members present at the AGM towards merchandise or diversification, with none identifying it as a problem and some wearing club merchandise at the AGM itself, and it is more than likely that City's obvious need for extra revenue generates an acceptance of the need to diversify its operations, to ensure it was not dependent on either limited gate receipts or results. This conception is of course central to football's modern business, and has been used to justify change over the last decade on a whole number of occasions.

Floatation and Finance

As noted previously, LCFC floated on the stock market in 1997, via cash shell Soccer Investments (which included Manchester United chief executive Martin Edwards),[323] with 10% of the shares being made available for supporters and the rest bought up by City institutions and existing

[323] *Electronic Telegraph*, 11 July 1997, *http://www.telegraph.co.uk*

directors.[324] The change saw the creation of a PLC board to deal with the business side of the company, plus one board to look after the football club. Obviously, this goes to the heart of modern financial processes in football, so LCFC offers potentially a good example of how organised fans relate to one of the most fundamental changes in their clubs. The effects of the float were to raise funds for new players (traditionally a problem for Leicester City), to multiply many times over the paper value of the directors' shareholdings, and to generate money for a new ground.

The ISA decided to buy shares in the float, in order to gain access to the club's AGM and ensure they could ask questions, as at the other clubs studied here. Two things are clear: firstly, there is very little sense in which floatation can be seen as 'democratising' City or opening it up to fans, as Cheffins suggests.[325] Aside from the limited number of shares available to fans, the float came within three months of renewing a club season ticket or the Madrid trip, and whereas Buckingham suggested that "most of the guys will have thought 'yeah, I will have a £100 of that'", the minimum shareholding that could be bought was set at £450, which clearly reduced even further access to the shares, and all but eliminated the possibility that the move would transform LCFC in the ways Cheffins describes.

However Buckingham reported a strong feeling that the floatation was essential for the club's long-term development: this highlights the centrality of the size of clubs like LCFC in shaping opinions, that it was still dealing in relatively small figures compared to the genuinely large operations of Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal etc, and needed to shore up its short-term future until an expanded ground capacity generated increased stable long-term revenue. Similarly to the attitudes expressed by BIFA members, there was a feeling that given their size, a club like Leicester had to follow whatever routes offered some possibility of successfully competing, making the maximalist 'principled' position an irrelevance. Buckingham reported very little opposition to the floatation, even despite the fact that the main driving

[324] *Electronic Telegraph*, 25 March 1997, *http://www.telegraph.co.uk*
[325] Cheffins 1997

force behind Soccer Investments was a director at a rival FAPL club: indeed, the only genuine point of contention appears to have been the size of the minimum investment required of supporters, and its exclusionary impact.

Certainly the AGM expressed confidence in the floatation, mainly due to the £10m it raised, and indeed the view was expressed that this figure undervalued the club, and that it could therefore have profited more: generally there was little dissatisfaction with, or active opposition to, the move. Of the fifteen members, nine were in favour and five opposed (although nine of the fifteen also felt that the best way to run LCFC involved supporters or local benefactors), while Buckingham suggested that the regulation that shareholders force on corporations could be potentially positive for the club, since the return they would seek on their investments would force it to develop, both on and off the pitch: to this extent, many of the guiding principles of football's modern financial strategies were positively welcomed by LCISA, and there was certainly no organised opposition to the floatation. There was always the possibility that LCISA could use its shareholding to resist future changes at the club, and therefore that the float has conceded some power to fans, but this tactic was not one fore-grounded by members or the committee, and in principle, the financial strategy was not resisted or contested. The modern view that the controls imposed by floatation can be beneficial for a club was clearly implicit in many of the views of the group. The Fans' Charter (discussed below) does include two caveats on LCFC's commercial business, with clauses that call on the club to "ensure that the football side of the company takes priority", and to "use the commercial aspects of the club to generate funds for the football side, not to simply to satisfy its own self-existence", and while these ideas prioritise the football side of the company over the non-football elements, neither fundamentally challenges the practice of commercialisation, and neither has sufficient definitional clarity to suggest that modern business strategies are genuinely problems for LCISA.

As with the other ISAs, however, one major concern in particular concerned personal profit by directors who were taking decisions on behalf of the club:

for LCISA, the club's European game in Madrid in September 1997 was marred by a substantial mark-up on the club's official travel packages for the match, which turned out to be £100 more expensive than an identical trip Aston Villa made the previous year. What turned out to be a conflict of interests (a club director ran the company that arranged the flights), caused a lot of controversy amongst fans and the local media, Buckingham notes, as later did the fact that club directors were being paid over £100,000 per annum post-floatation, as well as seeing the value of their shares rising significantly. Such concerns were also visible from the clause in LCISA's Fans' Charter that LCFC should "ensure where possible that the board of directors are Leicester City fans, or at least have some football interest", and in the group's Taskforce submission, which noted "great dangers on the horizon, as... investors [simply seeking financial returns] look for returns".[326]

Briefly, there was also opposition expressed to the formation of the proposed European Super League, on the grounds that football competitions "should not be geared to the size of [club] ground, the turnover of their leisure store or the wealth of their grounds"[327] and that the merit principle should remain the key qualification. Such attitudes reject in their entirety the principles that underpin the proposed European Super League and the motivations of key owners like Berlusconi at Milan and Edwards at Manchester United. Detaching the financial motive from the organisation and re-organisation of the modern game is a clear rejection of the current trajectory of the game and the logic that has driven change within football since the late 1980s.

These attitudes reject the modern acceptance of the personal motivations behind many of football's financial strategies, draw a value distinction between those investing in the club for profit motives and those who have an emotional or personal attachment to it, and operates from a much more traditional agenda where a club should not be run for money, but for love and loyalty. The sense that the club is best served by directors who are in these ways attached to it is clearly a fundamental rejection of the dominant financial

[326] LCISA submission to the Football Taskforce, 1998, page 4
[327] LCISA article in *The Fox*, Issue 80, Page 29

notion that shareholders and fans have the same objectives, and that shareholders can therefore be trusted to take whatever decisions are best for the future of the club. Centrally, it rejects the crucial conception of the industry and City institutions of a club as simply an investment vehicle like any other.

Atmosphere/Terraces

One of the major fault-lines between the two schools of fandom, terraces and atmosphere, is an issue on which LCISA offer clear resistance to the FAPL project, and some radical attitudes that fit neither traditionality nor modern profit maximisation.

While there has been evidence from the other fan groups of positive support for reintroducing terraces, there is little evidence here of a large groundswell of opinion in favour of terraces at Bede Island. Even after LCISA explicitly asked via the fanzine of a number of occasions for opinions, in order to get some feedback to take into meetings with the club, Buckingham reported very little reaction either for or against the principle of having terraces at Bede Island. However, when asked directly, the idea was supported by a majority of members at the 1997 AGM, with opinion 11-3 in favour of having standing areas of some sort, and also by a majority of LCISA, according to a LCISA article on the new stadium.[328] In view of this, the lack of any groundswell of support for the idea can be attributed to the fact that there is virtually no chance that the Government would allow the reintroduction of terraces at a top division ground, so the members would not consider it worth expending energy on, and because the majority of LCISA did not become members with a view to campaigning on issues: essentially the social roots of their membership eliminated the scope for involving themselves in such campaigns. However Buckingham also suggested that the type of supporters who want to stand are not actually members of organisations like LCISA, and that the "lads in the Kop... will do nothing in written form or anything like that about it [standing]", suggesting that LCISA members are not truly 'traditional'

[328] *The Fox*, Issue 80, page 29

fans, and that the true 'lads' (as King suggested) will not participate in engaged 'middle class' activities like joining groups and devoting time to campaigning activities.

Another potential reason for the lack of any great stampede in favour of terraces was the fact that City already allowed fans in the Spion Kop end to stand up between the seats during games, which satisfies the ambitions of most. Buckingham suggests that this 'laissez-faire' policy has effectively drawn the teeth of the pro-terracing campaign, by offering fans the space to express themselves and participate within the game and still satisfy modern stadium licensing regulations without the need to actually have terraces, but that were this policy to be reversed in favour of the Manchester United approach of making fans sit down, "they would have real problems". This policy of allowing standing is one that LCISA are seeking to have continued at Bede Island, along with unreserved seating, which re-brands the stadium as a culturally diverse space that should make allowances for, and allow for the expression of, different cultural traditions. The fact moreover that a whole section of the Filbert Street crowd routinely stands up during home matches does also in itself suggest that the traditional concepts of ecstatic bonding, participation, singing and expression (of whatever sort) during matches remain important to Leicester fans, and that attempts to deny them the space to do so would cause problems. Central elements of traditionality, in some forms, have thus not disappeared, and given the comments on anti-racism made above, have changed to fit more socially acceptable mores in ways deemed impossible in some quarters.

What is interesting is LCISA's suggestion that any new terraces at Bede Island be set aside for the family clubs or juniors, preventing (deliberately or otherwise) the usage of sections of the ground for the expression of male working class fandom, a suggestion repeated in the Taskforce submission. This radical suggestion does not fit modern norms, in that the FAPL appeal to families is based on 'comfort', leisure, and a consumer ethos, making it hard to see how this can be squared with the practice of standing at football, with the inherent lack of 'comfort' and regularity as understood by FAPL

discourses of *plaisir* and consumerism. Equally, traditionality has little time for family attendance, either of the commodified modern variety, or the sedate sort common in the past, and would expect that the spatial distinction between the standing and seating sections of the ground to form the divide line between traditionality and the other more sedate forms of fandom within the ground. Housing the junior fans in the terraces evokes in some ways a return to the days of the Boys' Pens, and would allow for juniors to watch free from the context of the family. Clearly the notion that families would be found on the terraces, or would want to watch the game from them, is a significant departure from traditionally understood notions of the terrace crowd, and of the role of the participatory culture in attracting fans onto the terraces. What is also clear is that the group's recommendation for at least considering safe terracing does not fit Ian Taylor's nostalgia, since they reject a return to uncontrolled banks of terraces that allow surges, but argue instead for modernised terraces with proper exits and barriers, on the grounds of choice, expression and the need to generate an atmosphere within stadia.

In more general terms, this traditional conception that fans should actively create an atmosphere during the match is one that LCISA clearly bought into, with their stadium blueprint including the retention of unreserved areas of seating such that singing fans can congregate together and create "that kind of cauldron effect". The view that atmosphere is a central feature of the match-day experience, an important feature of traditionality, is clearly at the heart of LCISA's position, to the point where LCISA hoped that the Bede Island ground could be designed specifically with the objective of keeping the noise in.[329] As noted elsewhere, this not only rejects the spectatorist, disengaged values of the FAPL, and resists the notion that fans are simply paying customers, but also reasserts the independent role of fans in the match-day experience, and potentially therefore opens the club up to expressions of values they wish to see suppressed. Admittedly, this is slightly tempered by the fact that the shallow standing areas LCISA wanted to see at Bede Island would not be primarily available to the 'hardcore' lads, but

[329] *The Fox*, Issue 80, page 29

nonetheless the effect would be to reclaim parts of the stadium as independent social and cultural spaces, and reassert the right to expression.

Anti-Racism

Discussed previously regarding the new stadium, anti-racism in a wider sense is an important part of the current context at Leicester. This forms a different background to that at most FAPL clubs, where no official differentiation is made between racial groups amongst fans, and where clubs are generally unprepared to make an issue of anti-racism. Complaints about FAPL stewards not dealing adequately with racist abuse,[330] and the fact that the first report produced for the Football Taskforce concerned anti-racist strategies[331] suggests that the problem remains un-addressed by many clubs. Leicester City themselves calculate that only 1% of the match-day crowd are of Asian descent,[332] despite the city's large Asian community, and since the start of 1998, LCFC have taken a number of steps to change this situation: these include the radical decision to sponsor a local Asian league, organising games between Asian children at reserve matches, employing Asian coaches, liasing with local Asian sports initiatives and issuing press releases to Asian publications, offering Asian festival organisers access to Filbert Street's corporate facilities, contributing to and endorsing anti-racist supplements by local paper the *Leicester Mercury*,[333] and, crucially, seeking to encourage coaches and scouts to seek out Asian talent in the community. Hence Leicester themselves have a highly pro-active agenda on the issue, and have moved beyond the usual limitations clubs impose on themselves to seek to positively generate diversity within the club and ground, rather than relying on the operations of the market. This is an area of campaigning work where LCISA would seek some credit for pushing the club towards such an agenda, and hence are firmly behind their strategy. An active commitment to anti-racism forms part of the Fans' Charter LCISA presented to LCFC (discussed below) and Buckingham noted how the group intended to target

[330] Electronic Telegraph, 29 March 1998, ' Racists face red card in soccer clean-up', *http://www.telegraph.co.uk*
[331] *Eliminating Racism from Football* (1998); report to the Football Task Force, March 1998
[332] Fans' Forum Minutes, 27 April 1998, page 5
[333] 'Foxes Against Racism', published by *Leicester Mercury*, March 10 1999

the Asian community as part of its organisational transformation in 1998. The importance LCISA attached to the issue is visible from its inclusion in their submission to the Taskforce,[334] arguing that clubs should pro-actively seek out Asian players.

Clearly, such a focus on anti-racism is not a part of traditionality as historically understood, and the steps that the club and LCISA took on this issue would engender hostility amongst many traditional supporters, yet it would also involve most of the clubs in political considerations their de-politicised consumer mentality is designed to eliminate. This list of steps on this issue also takes LCISA and the club beyond classic FSA paradigms, and while there is obviously a commercial agenda behind much of what LCFC is doing, equally the politicisation of the club that this involves is significant.

But what is significant here` is how LCISA members view this issue: *none* of the fifteen active members surveyed mentioned anti-racism of any sort when asked to identify priorities for LCISA. This suggests a case of the (relatively) 'radicalised' vanguard campaigning on issues that, while maybe not unwelcome to the members, are certainly not the issues they themselves foreground, or consider the core of LCISA's work. Anti-racism is just one example where the members' views and the campaigning work of the group did not correlate, where the members seemed content to let LCISA address such issues so long as their own expectations of its work (tickets and travel) were not compromised as a result (this also includes relations with other supporter groups). While this may not necessarily affect LCISA's actual operations, given the central role of the personal in all these groups (discussed in Chapter Seven), the division in perspective between 'top' and 'bottom', and the fact that the 'bottom' allow the committee to indulge in such campaigns are themselves significant, and say much about the nature of LCISA, the forces that created it and hold it together, and its significance in wider contexts within football, particularly the scope for fans becoming involved in political issues like this.

[334] Submission to Football Taskforce, 22 January 1998, page 2

The Fans' Charter

Overall, the Fans' Charter offers some good pointers to LCISA's values and culture: LCFC asked LCISA to consider a proposed three-point 'Customer Charter' (itself a revealing name) it had drawn up. This read:

- *We will endeavour to keep waiting times for our services to a minimum*
- *You should be greeted courteously and with a smile*
- *We ensure that all products are competitively priced*

LCISA responded by totally re-writing it (reproduced below). Buckingham notes that the club's draft of the Charter did not make "one mention of the word 'football'", and LCISA instead expanded these three abstract clauses to a fifteen-point football-specific and football-focussed plan (reproduced below). This rejection of LCFC's vague consumerist promises, that identified no difference between fans and other customers, is in itself significant.

LCISA's Fans' Charter

- *a commitment to supporting the manager and his attempts to improve the playing side by whatever means possible*
- *long-term use of a scouting policy*
- *improve the stadium and the facilities in it for all supporters*
- *ensure that Health and Safety standards are made a priority*
- *actively eradicate racism and violence from the club*
- *ensure that prices at the club are kept to bare levels so that the club remains open to all and not just the elite, and especially to juniors who will form the backbone of the club's support in the future*
- *continue to ensure that the most loyal fans get priority when tickets are limited*
- *identify and recognise those supporters who have stuck with the club through thick and thin, and reward them in whatever way possible*
- *give back benefits when possible to those who financially support the club upfront i.e. season ticket holders*
- *ensure that the football side of the company takes priority*
- *use the commercial aspects of the club to generate funds for the football side, not to simply to satisfy its own self-existence*
- *hear and heed supporters' opinions wherever possible*
- *an open policy of information regarding the club and its finance and workings*
- *ensure where possible that the board of directors are Leicester City fans, or at least have some football interest*
- *supply quality services and goods at a value for money price*

In general, this Charter points the ISA in several different directions at the same time. However, the overall air it created was one of a club that cannot take the opinions of supporters for granted, that must look at fans as more than consumers, and that re-specialises the football club by comparison with other capitalist ventures. The re-specialisation of the club (as seen in the clauses on openness and finance, and also on the *raison d'être* of the financial side of the club in the first place, particularly in the rejection of the personal profit motive) does fundamentally reject dominant discourses on the nature of the operation, and offers an alternative based squarely on fandom and affective ties.

Conclusions

The overall stance of LCISA is once more confusing and difficult to locate in relation to the two schools of fandom: essentially there is an acceptance of the modern state of affairs, and the club is clearly not the residue of excluded working class fans. More likely is that the ISA represent respectable upper-working class/lower-middle class fandom, that section of the crowd who are aware of the cultural changes around them, but are themselves not directly affected, who know that the ticket prices are excluding fans, but who are not themselves subject to such pressures. The genteel nature of the engagement of the ISA with the club and the approach throughout draws very much on FSA territory, and not on traditionality at all. Equally the gap between the attitudes of the members and the activities of the group at times suggests different motivations for joining and organising in the first place, and different conceptions of what the ISA exists to achieve.

However, there are important areas where the group push for policies that do resist the modern project: the focus on excluded fans is one, as is the whole area of anti-racism, and the blueprint for the stadium (if carried through) would result in the creation of a genuine community stadium. Once more this resists modern mores and redefines the role of the club *in toto* from the models at the heart of the FAPL project. It would be a huge exaggeration to suggest that the ISA represent working class fandom, but clearly there are elements of their attitudes that would drag the club and football generally

'back' towards more working class norms. What is also clear is how much difference the context of the club makes, and how the relative size and strength of the football club impacts heavily on attitudes amongst the fans.

The role that LCISA have carved out for themselves over the years is not an oppositional one, but draws on an odd mixture of NFFSC-style social events and access to tickets, and FSA representation paradigms, prepared as Buckingham argued to "stand up and say we are not happy about certain things the football club are doing", but essentially as and when the issues arise, instead of necessarily coming to the negotiating table with a fully worked out 'political' issue-based agenda.

Chapter Six - Newcastle United and INUSA[335]

If Southampton and Leicester City represent the tranche of relatively small FAPL clubs who have had to struggle to stay in the top division, Newcastle United (NUFC) represent the new money in English football and, along with Manchester United, are the epitome of its transformation. In the 1990s, the club has been completely reshaped by a local Thatcherite property developer, John Hall, who had previously claimed that he never wanted to take over a club.[336] Hall first became involved with Newcastle in 1988, when the club was nearly bankrupt: having failed to take outright control in a power struggle, he joined the board in 1990 and resigned the same year, only hastily to buy control of the club for around £3m when the creation of the Premier League was announced.[337] With millions spent on the stadium and the team (including then world record signing of Alan Shearer for £15m), Newcastle pulled themselves up from the foot of the First Division to finish second in the FAPL in 1996. Total turnover rose from £29m in 1996 to £41m the following year, and the club had the second highest wage bill in the FAPL that same season (£17.5m).[338]

The next 'logical' step in NUFC's transformation occurred in April 1997, when the club floated on the stock market, valued at around £180m. Hall later resigned as a director, although he was forced to return briefly after a scandal involving two other NUFC directors in March 1998 resulted in their resignations. By June 1998, Hall had left again, and a new board for the PLC was put in place, including the two shamed directors, Hall's son Douglas and Freddie Shepherd, who returned to the club in August 1998 (they were majority shareholders anyway), and to the Board in December 1998. 1996 onwards also saw plans by the club to leave St James' Park for a new 60,000

[335] The research for this chapter was carried out in 1998: the meetings attended were a committee meeting in February 1998, followed by the group's Annual General Meeting the following month, with questionnaires completed on both occasions. The interview was conducted with one of the two founders of INUSA, and current chair, Kevin Miles, in August and September 1998.
[336] Williams 1996b
[337] Conn suggests indeed that this was Hall's prime motivation for returning to the club; Conn 1997, page 58
[338] Deloitte and Touché 1998, page 18

all-seater facility at nearby Castle Leazes: this sparked considerable opposition from local residents and, in the end, NUFC withdrew the planning application and settled for a £41m expansion of St James' from a capacity of 36,000 to 51,000, which began in 1998.

NUFC represent in many ways a microcosm of football's enormous upheavals, the millions of pounds flowing through it, the centrality of the capital project to its transformation, and the motivations of the new generation of director. Yet the fans have been tremendously loyal: the 'Toon Army' are renowned for their passion and fervour, the enormous amount of merchandise they buy, and their support at away games.

The Independent Newcastle United Supporters Association (INUSA)

INUSA was founded in June 1994, basically as a response to United's attempts to raise the finance to redevelop St James' Park. The club introduced a Bond scheme (costing £500 each, and similar to those implemented at Arsenal and West Ham in the early 1990s), provoking opposition from supporters worried that they were in effect paying twice for their season tickets, and that fans who declined to buy a Bond would not be allowed to renew their season ticket. This perceived threat to the rights of season ticket holders, and the issue of the Bond in general, was the spark behind the formation of INUSA, with a protest meeting called to arrange a boycott against the scheme. Between 300 and 400 fans turned up at the meeting, and once the immediate issue of the Bond scheme had been dealt with, the decision was taken to form INUSA and about a quarter of those present joined up immediately. While their opposition to the Bond scheme is an obvious rejection of the business ethos and processes that Newcastle have become famous for under John and Douglas Hall, INUSA is (at least in the sense of the initial spark behind the protest) clearly not simply the response of the excluded or disenfranchised, since partly it did represent attempts by a more privileged group within the crowd (season ticket holders) to preserve their historically understood rights.

However, as chair Kevin Miles suggested, apart from the original spark for the protest, there were wider points of dissatisfaction with, or concern about, where the club was going: "there were lots of concerns about away ticket allocations, the expense of football generally, and it was unanimously agreed at the meeting to establish a supporters' association as an ongoing organisation, to press the club and take up the issues of the fans." Hence, as with the other ISAs, there was a need for an initial spark on a key and clear issue, to generate the wider momentum required for a long-term supporters' group. Miles also noted "there was definitely a feeling that the impact of money on football was starting to be felt by fans, and I think that was definitely a factor. The Bond scheme just seemed to be that writ large." A publicity leaflet distributed after the formation of INUSA noted supporter dissatisfaction on a range of issues, including rising ticket prices, the availability of tickets for St James' Park and the impact on younger supporters, the prices charged by NUFC's travel club for official European trips, away ticket allocations, the Bond scheme, and the general ineptitude of club administration.[339] Importantly, the flyer noted that "for all the footballing progress that's been made, the club seems to be out of touch with the concerns of many of the ordinary fans. That's why the Independent Newcastle United Supporters Association was set up - to give a voice to the fans."[340] This is important in highlighting how transformation created pressure and dissatisfaction that, though it coalesced initially around the single issue of the Bond scheme, fed into a wider process of organisation and campaigning. In this regard, INUSA stand out in this analysis.

There was obviously much on the flyer that rejected the effects of the commercialisation of football and the processes of capital accumulation at Newcastle, and the underlying ideology beneath those processes, *despite* the advances made by the team: the mark-ups charged on the official European trips were opposed by INUSA in terms of unfair competition and exploiting a captive market, while the failure of the club to restrict the numbers of season ticket holders at St James' Park was criticised for its

[339] INUSA newsletter, 1995, 'Newcastle fans need a united voice', page 2
[340] ibid.

exclusionary impact: NUFC's approach to season ticket holders was criticised, unlike Manchester United, for not "giving all their supporters a chance to see their team in action". This inclusive attitude, particularly towards young supporters (discussed below), fundamentally rejects and denies the revenue-driven approach of the modern industry: INUSA clearly start from the conception that supporters are made up of different types, all of whom have to be respected and protected.

Twenty-eight fans were surveyed at the committee meeting and the AGM (this covered nearly everyone present at both meetings), and of the 22 who answered the question as to why they joined INUSA, 13 did so in order to create some form of fan representation within the club, and 7 specifically out of opposition to the Bond scheme. Equally, 17 of the members did not approve of the culture of modern football, with 6 in favour and 4 undecided. Opposition to the club's chosen form of revenue-raising, the general thrust of club policy in a commercialised age, and the role of fans within that, were the major pressures that led to the creation of INUSA. One newsletter records how INUSA was "formed in response to the Bond Scheme. Our remit continues to be "to represent the views of the United supporters"."[341] The socially and ideationally informed ideological underpinnings of this conceptualisation of the club locates INUSA in opposition to transformation, particularly the introduction of business interests at the heart of decision-making processes at clubs (especially where those interests begin to have an impact on costs and patterns of attendance, and the nature of support). The protest meeting itself was effectively a success, in that while the club refused to send a delegation, they responded to some of the complaints in writing, including a clarification over the right to renew season tickets for those who declined to buy a Bond: crucially, despite the elimination of the original single-issue spark, there was sufficiently strong concern amongst fans about the nature of 'new football' to lead to the creation of a long-term fans' organisation. As Miles concludes, fans were reacting to the speed of change at NUFC and the commercialisation of the club, "but it took the Bond Scheme

[341] INUSA newsletter, June 1996, page 1

to trigger it". In this sense (as argued in Chapter Seven), INUSA is, in a sense, the most important of the ISAs examined here, in that the impetus for creating it did not relate to the team or on-the-pitch matters, but was a reaction and response to transformation and its perceived consequences: that impetus was then transformed into a more permanent, long-term, desire to represent fans and seek to participate in decision-making processes. Such a pattern is not very common in English football, and represents a break with the normal (that is, historically common) processes of, and motivations for, forming and sustaining a fan group, and even within this sample of active ISAs, INUSA clearly stand out.

Demography

Like the other ISAs examined here, INUSA took an overtly inclusive attitude towards the modern crowd. The only genuine exception to this was the category of corporate fans. But even then, there was no opposition in principle to these fans, and instead the approach was marked by an absence of the contemptuous attitudes of traditionality towards other types of supporters: though there was no support for the social practices central to corporate hospitality, opposition was always a measured response within the context of the total capacity, the relative respect accorded to each type of fan, and, therefore, the relationship between each. This point is crucial; it demonstrates that it is the failure of clubs to create (and demonstrate) a genuine *balance* between the interests of different types of fans, and take their different interests into account, that generates resentment and opposition, rather than simply an abstract class or sectional interest opposition. This point harbours obvious implications for all clubs. Moreover, the fact that the only 'opposition' was directed against corporate hospitality (itself significant in wider terms of resistance) highlights how INUSA seems not to have operated as a narrow class or sectional group for those excluded or alienated by the elimination of traditionality and its modes of expression.

INUSA was similar to the other ISAs analysed here: the committee was predominately male, with two women present out of a total of nine members at the meeting in February 1998: Miles reported that total committee

membership at that point was eighteen, including only three women. There was never any suggestion that a Women's Officer be appointed, but Miles countered that "there have been five women on the committee in all, and they are better represented on the committee than they are in the stadium, there is no question about that." INUSA in fact advertised the fact that they had female involvement, noting in publicity material that "on our organising committee we have a good mix of male and female supporters":[342] equally the group were particularly exercised by the comments about the women of the north-east made by Hall and Shepherd.[343] Such an approach makes it very hard to entertain accusations of masculinism against INUSA, or to suggest that INUSA defended a sexist mentality within football. But nonetheless the group was basically controlled by male fans: the AGM (with 30-35 fans present) was male-dominated, roughly 90%-10%, and in all, only two women contributed to the proceedings. Once again, there seemed to be a reluctance amongst the women members (even those on the committee) to proffer an opinion, and the further fact that the AGM was generally a low-activism affair (until the football 'talk' began in earnest) should be noted alongside the reluctance of the women members to venture a contribution at the committee meeting in February 1998.[344] That said, it was clear that INUSA had an inclusive style of operation at meetings, with opportunities for all to contribute: therefore, we have to seek the reasons for the limited contribution of the women members elsewhere, and not in the context put in place by the (male) hierarchy. While the profile of INUSA fits traditional conceptions of football and its crowds, the actual ethos of the Committee and the group more widely did not.

As with other groups, there was also a clearly discernible age-range, from around the late 20s to the late 30s, which generally applied to the committee. Clearly, the politicised edge of INUSA seems unattractive, or non-relevant, to younger supporters, particularly those who continue to have regular access

[342] INUSA newsletter, June 1996, page 1
[343] 'Newcastle sees victory for fan power', 24 March 1998. *http://www.nando.net*
[344] In fairness, however it must be noted that one of the two women members on the committee had only just joined it at that time, and so maybe was reluctant at the start to offer opinions.

to match tickets. More generally, the INUSA committee and membership included a broad range of different types of fans, with fans in couples, fans with children etc. In 1996, INUSA noted the presence on the committee of these diverse sorts of fans, "young and not-so-young, those who travel to every away match and those that travel occasionally, Bond-holders and non Bond-holders".[345]

Other demographic pointers to INUSA's included the 24 (of 28) members who agreed that the FAPL is an attempt to make football a middle class sport; only four declined to describe themselves as traditional fans, 25 felt that INUSA should be campaigning for traditional working class values at football, and 25 were ex-terrace supporters. However, the sample was divided between members whose attendance patterns had been affected by price rises at St James' Park, and those who had not: the sample split 13-12, with the majority noting no adverse implications on their attendance patterns. Given the specific circumstances at NUFC, this suggests both a large number of employed fans and also a high proportion of season-ticket holders amongst the sample of active members. Such a profile generally points to and suggests the predominance of a certain class attitude, particularly when combined with the ideological underpinnings of INUSA, that can be located in upper-working class fractions.

The inclusive attitude towards the crowd is clear from some of INUSA's campaigning work, and from the fact that the group advertised itself to people affected by the way "the Board are alienating loyal United supporters".[346] This covered all social groups within football, with INUSA raising the issue of disabled supporters' access and the availability of tickets for disabled fans with the Football Taskforce when it visited Newcastle in November 1998,[347] while committee members also agreed to seek out the opinions of disabled Newcastle fans to see what issues they wanted to see raised at the

[345] INUSA newsletter, June 1996, page 1
[346] INUSA newsletter, 1995, page 1
[347] INUSA Taskforce submission, 1998, section 2

Taskforce meeting.[348] Other meetings (in 1997 and 1998) raised the same issue, and, as part of the north-east Fans Forum, INUSA explicitly noted their "support [for] the ongoing commitment and improvement to facilities at our region's stadiums for disabled supporters".[349] Interestingly, however, Miles suggested a reticence within INUSA to speak for disabled fans since the group's membership contained so few of them: in a form of empowerment, Miles argued that disabled fans should directly represent themselves.

More generally, INUSA sought to address the issue of social exclusion within St James' Park, where rapidly rising season ticket prices and the elimination of tickets for match-day sale were deemed to be creating an ageing crowd and excluding those on lower incomes. In their Taskforce submission, INUSA noted the danger of the current pricing schemes in place at St James' Park resulting in the loss of a generation of younger fans, and complained about the lack of concessionary prices to younger supporters.[350] Equally, in an open letter to John Hall in 1995, INUSA explicitly noted the economic circumstances of people living in the north-east, and the need not to divorce the pricing policy of the club from such circumstances: secretary John Regan argued that "many loyal supporters simply cannot afford to purchase a season ticket. The north-east of England is a depressed area with high unemployment and many low-paid, part-time workers. To many of these people, a season ticket at St James' remains a dream".[351] An earlier INUSA newsletter also noted the "many low paid workers, unemployed, supporters with work commitments and youngsters who are being denied the opportunity to see the most exciting team in the country".[352] As part of the north-east Forum for Fans, INUSA also supported ticket concessions for "the low paid, unemployed, OAPs, disabled, juveniles and students".[353]

These are essentially traditional attitudes, issuing into the expectation that the club's loyalties and focus should be directed towards its local supporter

[348] Minutes, INUSA committee meeting April 1998, section 4
[349] North-East Forum for Fans, Mission Statement, point 3
[350] INUSA Taskforce submission, 1998, section 4
[351] INUSA letter to John Hall, June 1995, page 1
[352] INUSA Newsletter, June 1996, page 1

base, and that its pricing policies should be tailored towards them and their circumstances. Such an approach clashes fundamentally with the globalising logic increasingly at the heart of clubs like United, and particularly the way that this 'forces' clubs to seek out the most potentially lucrative markets, in effect denying any social or moral responsibility to the locality from which it sprung. In the process, clubs systematically and purposefully detach themselves from the locality, local supporters and their economic circumstances. To this extent, INUSA's focus on what secretary John Regan called the "traditional working class"[354] element within the crowd, and their growing disenfranchisement from the game, operate as a fundamental rejection of the business practices and ethos of the 1990s, and of the capitalist paradigm that inexorably drives the clubs towards the best, most lucrative, sources of revenue, wherever they may be. To connect the club to the economic situation of the north-east is to imbue United with a sense of the social that would deny it the opportunity, or limit the scope of attempts, to de-localise its operations and target spectator base, with obvious implications for NUFC's position within the market, and the pecuniary attraction of its commercial operations. However, once more, INUSA's comprehensive inclusiveness towards the crowd, as noted earlier, is more a FSA tradition than one that traditionality would defend, particularly the support for ticket concessions for fans like students.

Confirming such an FSA mentality, INUSA equally did not have any objections to family or women supporters (as noted), and there was a strong anti-racist side to its work (discussed below). However, unlike with the other groups studied here, little campaigning was done to *promote* the family as a form of fandom, partly, it would appear, because of the restrictions created by the heavily limited capacity at St James' Park, and also because there seemed to be little genuine interest in doing so. Miles noted that INUSA "don't have a particular problem with [family enclosures]", which is clearly not the same as the genuine support for family fandom exhibited by BIFA, SISA and LCISA, and in any case, the issue of the stadium was heavily

[353] North-East Forum for Fans, Mission Statement, point 1
[354] INUSA newsletter, June 1996, page 1

conditioned by its capacity that made every game an all-ticket occasion. INUSA's position was essentially neutral, in that the group tolerated family football, but did not actively push for it in the way that other ISAs did. Despite the fact that 17 of the 28 members did not like modern football culture, ten specifically approved of family attendance at matches. Whether this is support for families as a delivery system for ensuring children (the next generation of fans, as INUSA see them) can access live football, or support for FAPL forms of family football (with its ideological consequences) was not clear, although there was no support anywhere in INUSA for the values and practices of this notion of fandom. However, since traditional football culture was contemptuous of family football, and valued other forms of interaction and fandom, INUSA cannot be seen as the repository of traditionality in its purest sense, but again lies much more clearly within FSA territory.

Generally, the restricted capacity was the key context to INUSA's approach towards demography, within a situation where too many fans were competing for a very small number of tickets. United have one of the highest season ticket to capacity ratios in the FAPL (95.6% in 1996-97)[355] which, when combined with the high and escalating prices, and the advantage schemes available (Platinum Club, Bond scheme and Box-Holders) makes St James' Park one of the most difficult grounds to get into: it is within this context that INUSA's attitude towards demography must be located, and which led to their opposition to the focus on corporate hospitality. As suggested above, it was the *trade-off* between types of fans that generated opposition to the corporate element, and Miles quite explicitly noted that if the playing field between cash-rich elements within the crowd and the rest was level and fair, there would be no objections to anyone entering the ground: "if you were talking about extra people coming into the stadium, we'd welcome more fans to football, the more the better. The complication is that everybody can't get in, and because there is competition, traditional supporters are being squeezed out. Your welcome to the new fans is being tempered by the fact that traditional fans are being squeezed out. If it [St James'] was an ever-

[355] *Match of the Day* magazine, November 1997, page 31

expanding stadium and you could take anybody, we'd have anybody coming." This again highlights the focus in INUSA's vision on those generally less fortunate than the members and committee.

Contemptuous of corporate spectators (as expressed from the floor at the AGM, and by some committee members), nevertheless INUSA accepted it as part of modern football, but only on the clear proviso that other sections of the crowd, notably those for whom the football *means* something, could equally get into games and express themselves. Miles summed up INUSA's position thus: "If Newcastle had a stadium of 100,000 people, and they had one corner of it for corporate fans and guests, then get the money off them! As long as it does not exclude the ordinary fans, which is what is happening." Only one member of the 28 saw corporate hospitality as an issue in principle and wanted to see INUSA campaign against such spectators at St James' Park: in general, INUSA's approach was to tolerate them as long as genuine fans were not excluded in the process. This attitude clearly is compatible with, and accepts, traditionality's hierarchical conception of the nature of corporate attachment to football. In this, genuine personal attachment to the club sets the *real* fans apart, especially from the detached mentality of corporate spectators, seen, in this context, as a lesser breed of attendee. This conceptual focus on *why* people go to football fits traditional fandom.

Miles' hope of an all-inclusive stadium that simultaneously accommodates a range of fan traditions and backgrounds obviously sought to circumvent the problematic issue of the *relationship* between such traditions and backgrounds, and the fact that the modern appeal to professional and family middle classes is fundamentally predicated on the demonisation and removal of the cultural practices of the past (standing up, singing, chanting etc). Generally, INUSA's position, realistic or otherwise, was simply too liberal and inclusive for United to accept, even in principle, for it would mean re-introducing groups of fans into the ground who simply lack the disposable income clubs seek in order to generate profit from their non-ticket commercial activities, and who can be relied upon to express themselves in ways that do not damage the modern project. INUSA, for instance, took up the cause of a

group of fans threatened with exclusion from St James' Park because they stood up during games and obscured a corporate advert in the process.

Clearly, INUSA operated with an inclusive view of the crowd, and the need to regulate a balance between different types of supporters attending matches, rather than to leave it to the market orientation of top clubs, where the only criteria for entry is the ability to pay a given sum. That INUSA is located more within FSA frameworks - rather than in traditional discourses - is, by and large, determined by the nature of its all too clear inclusiveness.

Structure and Activities

Like these other ISAs, INUSA clearly use FSA models of organisation. The committee (comprising, at maximum, eighteen people) was elected annually by the active membership, with specific tasks given to individuals according to their experience. Minutes were kept, formal agenda supplied and adhered to, with most business conducted by the committee. The AGM proposed a set of rules and a constitution, which once again bore all the hallmarks of the FSA, and enshrined INUSA as a representative democracy, where "policy-making and executive" power was generally with the committee, which was in turn accountable to the active members.

This standard FSA model of organisation, dominant since the mid-1980s, was altogether apparent from simple observation of INUSA meetings. The excitable and not entirely controlled tactics that bedevilled campaigns at Brighton and Portsmouth in the mid-late 1990s would clearly have been out of place here, and instead INUSA seemed to rely to a large extent on publicity, and on the fact that journalists knew they could come to INUSA, as a representative organisation, for a relevant quote they could use. INUSA sought publicity for the *Wear United* campaign (discussed below), but did not need to seek it after that campaign, as local and national journalists knew they could approach INUSA for views: the sheer newsworthiness of NUFC in recent years meant that INUSA rapidly became a media insider, a position they have sought to exploit as often as possible, which again reinforces the need for respectable tactics. Group funds were limited and entirely self-

generated: INUSA has depended on its members for subscriptions, donations, purchase of domino cards, lottery bonus ball schemes, raffles and quizzes, to keep itself solvent and its activities going. Other fund-raising schemes included Football Nights and Talk-Ins. The relatively small scale of its operations was reflected in INUSA's financial position for the period between May 1996 and March 1998: total income at the end of that period stood just under of £400, and total expenditure around £360; as of 23 March 1998 INUSA's balance stood at £54.30 in credit.[356]

Meetings had a political and campaigning aspect and a social aspect: central to this strategy were attempts to attract greater attendance and activism from members by getting respected individuals within the NUFC and local football scene to attend the meetings and discuss issues of interest, which suggests that the primary focus and point of interest for most members was not political or campaigning, but was ultimately football and a sense of common fandom. The perceived need to offer some light relief from the campaigning aspect of INUSA's work seem to confirm that these were fans reluctantly pushed into activism by events, and that their preference would, in fact, be to talk about football.

As with the FSA, the fanzines, in their general role of forming and sustaining informal football networks,[357] were involved with INUSA from its inception, with adverts placed in the fanzines to publicise specific meetings and INUSA itself: INUSA also, from the start, invited the fanzine editors onto the committee as *ex officio* members, although INUSA links with the editors of *The Mag*, and *No 9*, later declined due to disagreements over the appropriate response to the Hall and Shepherd scandal. The editor of *Talk of the Tyne* successfully stood for election to the INUSA committee in his own right in 1997. The 1998 AGM was also advertised via the fanzines, suggestions for joint campaigning with the fanzines on various issues were made: indeed, Miles suggested that INUSA used the fanzines because initially that was the only way to contact fans (an important point, in view of the financial status of

[356] INUSA Financial Statement 1998
[357] Jary, Horne and Bucke 1991

the group). This is not the stuff of traditionality, but is clearly far more FSA territory, as was the use of press releases, opinion polls and surveys (for instance during INUSA's campaign in support of the Castle Leazes development, discussed below), plus depositions to the Football Taskforce and meetings with, and letters to, the club and local media.

In terms of INUSA's miscellaneous activities, while most focused on NUFC and its fans, the group occasionally moves beyond such boundaries to engage with other fans, notably over the *Wear United* campaign (discussed below) where INUSA joined forces with their bitterest local rivals, Sunderland, to campaign against a ban on away fans at the north-east derbies. As Miles put it "if we can [campaign] with Sunderland over something that affects both sets of fans, if you can overcome all the antipathy there, then I think you can do anything." Other cross-club activities included the Hillsborough campaign (the subject of one of only two resolutions moved at the 1998 AGM, plus discussions at committee level on what practical help INUSA could offer the campaign),[358] a pro-terraces campaign with IMUSA, SISA and others, plus central and crucial involvement in attempts in 1998 to create a new national supporters' organisation through a merger of the FSA and the ISAs. Other initiatives include the creation of the north-east Fans Forum (involving fans from five north-east clubs and the FSA), and establishing links with fans across Europe. It is clear how the oppositional ethos of traditionality would tend to disallow such an agenda.

However, despite these activities, none of the 28 members had ever joined the FSA: this is partly attributable to the historical difficulties the FSA had in sustaining an active north-eastern branch, but, equally importantly, ten members preferred INUSA because of its local focus. When asked what sort of activities INUSA should engage in, none of the members mentioned anything that spanned cross-club boundaries, or that did not have a Newcastle angle, and the majority of the issues suggested focused entirely on Newcastle United and its fans. There was a strong 'parochial' focus on

[358] This was the author's sole intervention at the AGM, when Kevin Miles asked for a brief update on the justice campaign around Hillsborough, as noted in Chapter Two.

NUFC amongst active members, and FSA cross-club norms were clearly absent amongst the rank and file. The attitude of INUSA, according to Miles, was generally not to address abstract or national issues that lacked resonance with United, or United fans' experiences, but to link up with national issues only where they directly affected United fans or the strategies INUSA needed to deal with issues at St James' Park. As he put it "how do you change the minds of the boards of Manchester United and all the others? By linking up with the fans over a common interest". In general, the members' priority was largely located within the wider range of interests and priorities of the committee, although the committee remained more open to cross-club, less NUFC-focused issues. This is not to say that the committee engaged in activities in which members had no interest, or allowed their focus to shift from NUFC, but that their position forced them at least to address other issues, in which the members had little active interest. It also has to be said that on some important issues, the approach of the committee and the inclination of the members clearly coincided, such as in their opposition to a European Super League (as proposed by Italian company Media Partners in August 1998).

From the start, despite the distrust with which the club viewed INUSA over the Bond and other issues, INUSA sought meetings with directors to establish a dialogue and raise issues of concern to members. This tactic was repeated in coming years as new appointments were made at United (like the new Director of Communications, Alistair Wilson, appointed in summer of 1998). This is obviously an FSA tactic, compared to traditionality's loud noisy tactics, standing outside boardrooms, invading the pitch etc. At one point in 1995, INUSA even requested space within the match programme or official club magazine to put across their message to as many different fans as possible.[359] INUSA's early days saw three meetings with chief executive Freddie Fletcher, with the first instigated by INUSA, clearly showing the inclusive and accommodating attitude taken by the group, and their lack of support for hard-edged confrontational traditional tactics.

[359] INUSA letter to John Hall, June 1995, page 4

But like other groups examined here, the relationship with the club was often or always difficult, and essentially one-way: Miles reported that the flow of information from St James' Park was always poor, and that INUSA had to resort to undercover gathering of information and relying on "contacts"; even when the club met INUSA, Fletcher began by saying that United did not recognise INUSA as a representative fans' organisation. United were highly suspicious of INUSA, to the point of reportedly instigating the creation in August 1998 of the 'Official Newcastle United Supporters Club', which many viewed as a battering ram against INUSA. This attempt to return to a NFFSC mentality,[360] albeit with the addition of centralised club control, highlights the gap between INUSA and the FAPL norms of loyal, uncritical spectators who consumer merchandise as a form of both identification and of 'supporting' the club.

Equally interesting, from the point of view of INUSA's activities, is how the growing success on the pitch, year-on-year, of Newcastle United failed to affect membership. Whereas at the other ISAs, ebb and flow of membership could be correlated to some degree with the performance of the team, INUSA membership curved gently upwards throughout the first four years of its existence, with a few peaks around serious crises, such as the Hall/Shepherd scandal. These were years in which the team became consistently better (until 1998), and the club as a whole expanded and became more profitable. The initial protest meeting against the Bond Scheme saw 90 names collected as potential members (though Miles highlights confusion at the meeting, and argues that the real constituency for membership that night and generally was much higher), with numbers growing to 400 by March 1995.[361] Membership stabilised around this level for a few months, increasing steadily over the next two years to reach 540 by early 1998, to grow by 60 (over 10%) in the immediate aftermath of the scandal over Hall and Shepherd.

[360] Taylor 1992
[361] INUSA newsletter, February 1995, page 1

Such a curve, where the visibly positive development of the team did not reduce membership levels, suggests that there were serious points of contention at the club, tied up in transformation, and that, to some extent, issues like ticket price and access to the stadium tended to over-ride the performance of the side, as a central factor determining the level of membership. Equally, the cost of joining rose from £1 in 1994 to £5 in 1998, but this did not seem to adversely affect membership levels either. However, the turn-out of 30-35 members for the 1998 AGM and Talk-In (featuring ex-United players John Anderson and Malcolm McDonald), held just two days after Hall and Shepherd had resigned from the club, was deemed disappointing by the organisers, who took the view that had the directors still been in place attendance would have been considerably larger. Many fans seemed to take the short-term view that once the directors had been forced to step down, there was nothing else to fight for. While the membership curve does fore-ground the issues that surround the club, the experience of the AGM indicates the need (yet again) for a genuine and visible spark to motivate fans, and sustain activism and participation over time, and the reactive nature of much of this activism.

INUSA also had some of the features that adversely affected the FSA, such as its reliance, to a large degree, on the original founding members for activism and organisation: Miles reports (as confirmed by minutes of various meetings) that about half the 1998 committee were founding members, or had been involved from INUSA's inception, plus the fact that INUSA decided to pro-actively approach prospective committee members, since people seemed otherwise reluctant to get involved. While there were attempts to broaden committee membership and spread the workload, there was a strong sense of dependence upon the work and activism of a small number of individuals, particularly the two founders, chair Kevin Miles and vice-chair John Regan. Only four of the 28-strong sample claimed any activism beyond attending meetings, with INUSA operating with similar levels of activism as the other ISAs analysed here.

The Stadium

As noted previously, the most ambitious and far-reaching project John Hall put in place at United was the proposed move to Castle Leazes, a public park within the city boundaries next to St James' Park. In the end, the project collapsed and NUFC chose instead to redevelop St James', but INUSA were heavily and proactively involved the issue: analysing their actions and attitudes on what *sort* of stadium they wanted reveals much about the nature of INUSA, and its relationship with the dominant football culture.

Essentially, INUSA supported United throughout the planning application, and particularly the campaigns to convince the council and local people of the plan's merits. However, it must be noted that given the choice, INUSA preferred to stay at St James' Park and expand its capacity, an option that NUFC claimed was impossible on 'geological' grounds. A significant majority of the committee (20 out of 27) supported moving from St. James' Park, and of the 6 who declared themselves against the plan, the majority were mainly concerned with the seats they would be allocated in the new ground compared to their positions at St James' Park (that is, had essentially personal motives for their opposition). United's first objective, to move, was thus accepted and supported; the fans were seeking a greater capacity, to allow more fans to attend, and were also partly motivated by the possible regeneration of a depressed area of Newcastle (an objective not found in the traditional view of fandom). INUSA actively supported the campaign, helping to collect signatures for a pro-stadium petition on behalf of the club, writing letters to regulatory authorities and politicians, and generally aligning themselves with the club.

INUSA's rationale, according to one newsletter, was that "if it proved unviable to substantially increase the attendance at St James' then we would support the move", based on the claim that "we considered it our duty to take into account the thousands of existing and future supporters who cannot see the team with the present capacity being so low".[362] The central justification for

[362] Both quotes from INUSA newsletter, June 1996, page 1

supporting the Castle Leazes project fits FSA, or even traditional, agenda of prioritising the interests of the excluded and those who struggle to afford a ticket; as noted elsewhere, the newsletter argues, "there are many low-paid workers, unemployed, supporters with work commitments and youngsters who are being denied the opportunity to see the most exciting team in the country".[363] There was only one sense in which the rationale for supporting the move to Castle Leazes can be seen as accepting modern commercial logic, namely the gap between the capacity of St James' Park and of Manchester United's ground: the newsletter suggested that the "massive differential" between the two stadia needed to be looked at,[364] accepting the FAPL's competitive logic whereby clubs adapt and accept whatever trends they need to keep up with developments at each other. But even this has to be placed within the demographic context noted earlier.

The club's wider objectives for the new facility (outlined in Phase 2 section of a planning application that was never submitted for formal consideration) fitted the modern business agenda of diversification, commodification and commercialisation: the original Castle Leazes plan presented to the Labour council (costing between £90m and £100m) featured a 60,000 all-seater ground with an ice-rink and retail facilities,[365] a 4,500 capacity car-park and a banqueting hall.[366] Commercial objectives were equally apparent in the plans subsequently put forward for the redevelopment of St James' Park, which envisaged 76 extra hospitality boxes, restaurant and kitchen facilities, a car-park, TV studios, and 15,000 extra seats.[367] INUSA openly resisted this diversification agenda, and as a consideration of one of the major fault-lines in the modern game (what is the stadium for?) their outright rejection of increasingly profitable additional operations for the club was essentially traditional. Additionally, the stadium the members would have constructed also highlighted a significantly different concept compared to modern developments in British stadia. The members were asked, in a questionnaire,

363 ibid.
364 ibid.
365 *Electronic Telegraph*, 2 July 1996, 'Backing for Newcastle stadium land swap'
366 *Electronic Telegraph*, 20 December 1996, 'Newcastle pave way towards next century'
367 *The Shadow*, Federation of Stadium Communities newsletter, Issue 9, Aug. 1998, page 6

to identify the features they would want to see included in their next ground: the results are summarised in Table Four.

Table Four: the features INUSA members wanted to see at their next ground (n=28)

DESIGN FEATURE	IN FAVOUR	OPPOSED
On-site leisure facilities	1	27
Sport facilities for local schools etc	18	8
Bars/restaurants for 'ordinary' spectators	25	2
Bars/restaurants for corporate spectators	11	17
Family stands/enclosures	26	2
Terraces	24	3
Dedicated public transport links	19	7
Dedicated car parking	16	9
Corporate boxes/suites	14	13
'Ordinary' match-day suites	16	10
Other suggestions: crèche 5, disabled facilities 1, singing areas 2 and banners 1.[368]		

This stadium clearly has very different features and underpinning ideologies, from modern stadium redevelopment, where the ground is a commercial site constructed to make club finances independent of the performance of the team. The overwhelming support for family stands and terraces (revealing again the inclusivity central to INUSA's approach towards different types of fans) is enhanced by the very lukewarm support for facilities for corporate spectators and evenly divided view on the now ubiquitous executive boxes. This highlights, again, the lack of empathy with corporate spectators, and maybe a sense that such elements of the crowd are already too well treated by NUFC. Equally, the strong support for local community access and near 100% rejection of on-site leisure facilities were other elements of the design that would resist modern mores in important ways: Miles was at pains to point out that the diversified stadium was precisely what INUSA did not want to see built at Castle Leazes: "we came out with a statement that we did not want a running track [etc], we wanted a dedicated football stadium". He also noted that the INUSA committee was convinced to support the planning application only while the plan was for a football ground, amid "definite resistance to the ideas for hotels and conference centres". The type of new ground INUSA were looking for was essentially a community stadium, with

[368] 'Other Suggestions' were all unprompted answers freely chosen by the members. The other options listed in Table Four were supplied as part of the questionnaire.

disabled facilities, standing areas, blocks of tickets reserved for match-day cash sale, terraces if allowed by the government and unreserved seating areas (again revealing the importance of traditional concepts like communality and camaraderie to INUSA's preferred match-day experience). INUSA actively pressurised the club for a cap on the number of season tickets sold once the redevelopment of the ground was complete, and a formal decision to ensure that unreserved sections were created. Family enclosures in themselves were not deemed a problem (although Miles reported difficulties in how the family enclosure actually operated at St James' Park), while, in line with the views of the members, corporate hospitality would not be positively welcomed; maybe, instead, it was seen as something that would inevitably be included in any new ground and hence there was little point making a campaign issue of it.

Despite this acceptance, the stadium that INUSA members would collectively design was ideologically and conceptually divorced from the commercial paradigms of the modern game; INUSA's rejection of the diversified multi-use stadium underlines the more traditional and indeed FSA-based paradigms within which it operated. Their heavily focused view of what the stadium is for (and the cultural practices permissible and encouraged within it), was at odds with the controlled and homogenised conception of the ground according to FAPL culture: in the INUSA-designed stadium, the corporate element would sit side-by-side with the family enclosure, singing areas and unreserved block, plus a terrace if possible. Such a ground not only reflects the highly inclusive position INUSA adopted on demography and the validity of different forms of expression (an essentially non-traditional position), but also rejects the homogenisation of the modern stadium; hence, while again INUSA could not be firmly located in either camp of fandom, they had more in common with traditionality, in particular through their support for the latter's focus on the right of fans to express themselves as they choose. There was certainly no room in such a stadium or in its ideological underpinnings for the FAPL's no-swearing, cheerleader mentality. Equally, the fact that the majority of members supported some role for the local council in the development of the Castle Leazes site resists some key elements of modern football; 13

members out of 28 wanted to see Castle Leazes financed by the council and then leased to NUFC, while 8 of the 28 wanted NUFC to finance and own Castle Leazes, but with the council paying the club for local school and community access to the facility. Only five supported the FAPL maximalist free market notion of the club financing and owning the whole facility itself: giving local political authority an institutional role within the stadium clearly restricts the club's scope for commercial development, revenue maximisation, and other key elements of the rationale for stadium redevelopment and modern business strategies within the game.

Finance, Diversification and Representation

Some of the biggest changes to NUFC in the 1990s have concerned the financial side of the club (with NUFC floating in 1997) and within that, the notion of representation and considerations of the ideal relationship between fans and club became an issue. This territory, particularly the financial project of the game, has been central to its transformation, the interest shown by global capital in football clubs, and to the preparedness of directors to pour millions of pounds into clubs. To this extent, INUSA's approach towards this area was potentially significant, particularly within the context of the scandals surrounding Hall and Shepherd mentioned previously (which it is fair to presume did alter fan opinions on some issues in the area of finance and personal motivations of directors).

The transformation in NUFC's financial position in the 1990s under Hall has been, by any standards, staggering: having been almost bankrupt in 1991, the club was able to spend up to £40m on players and £30m on the ground since, and generate millions more through merchandising and corporate hospitality. For a while, Hall also created a Geordie version of the Barcelona Sporting Club, in which local rugby union, boxing, basketball, ice hockey and hockey teams were brought under the control of NUFC, and a rugby league club created, to form a sporting empire based around the club as part of a diversification process, and reputed attempts to act as a public spearhead for

the north-east.[369] Thus, United has grown and diversified in remarkable ways in a very short space of time. Miles argued that the Halls were generally able to transform NUFC into a business without generating genuine opposition (apart from within INUSA, that is), because the team was successful and stylish, and the upturn in fortunes was effected in a short period, but once that ended in 1997-98, the tide of opinion turned. This suggests classic instrumentalist fandom, where the means to success are subordinated to success as an end in itself.

INUSA's position on these issues was, to a large extent, framed by the trap of the big but failing club that suddenly had millions to spend, what Miles calls the "two-edged sword" of welcoming success on the pitch created by the financial revolution, but having to pay considerably more for tickets and watching the club becoming a huge commercial organisation as a result. In general, INUSA opposed much of the game's financial revolution, particularly key elements of it that underpin the current influx of capital. Just like the other ISAs here, the element of personal profit (a good explanation for much of what has changed within football in the 1990s) was clearly problematic for INUSA, as clear from the Hall and Shepherd episode.[370] Miles suggested that the notion of directors personally profiting from NUFC's merchandising struck at the heart of why fans tolerated the ever-rising prices for kits and other items: "everybody knew that you paid over the odds for a shirt, but you thought you were helping the club out, contributing to a common cause. You then find that the people in charge of the club are rubbing their hands, and taking the piss, because you are giving them money to piss up against a wall in a Spanish brothel." The rejection of personal profit was also clear from INUSA's Taskforce submission, which explicitly disapproved of the £2.38m paid to directors John Hall, Douglas Hall and Freddy Shepherd for their services in 1997.[371]

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[369] The short-lived 'Geordie Nation' conception, described by Williams 1996b, and *The Guardian*, April 8 1996, Section 2, pages 2 and 3

[370] As noted in Chapter Two: the two directors rejoined the club board in December 1998, sparking the resignation of three non-executive directors. *http://www.newcastle-utd.co.uk/news/newsfiles/981208z.htm*

The attitudes that Miles summed up as INUSA's general approach towards the financial revolution were essentially FSA principles, a rejection of the profit motive and the relentless drive to find new and more lucrative sources of revenue. Hence INUSA would welcome PPV only if it was priced solely to cover costs and so offered those unable to participate on the grounds of wealth a way out of that exclusion: as Miles puts it, "why can't you provide [PPV] as a service, and just cover costs? And if you paid 50p every match, just to cover the costs of the broadcasts, I don't think that would be a problem, why does the club have to make a fortune out of it?". The fact that no members supported PPV (17 opposed it and 7 were undecided, preferring to wait and see how it developed) implied that they were aware that divorcing PPV from the financial motivation behind it was highly unlikely, since for most clubs, socially aware pricing schemes would eliminate most of the point for starting the system in the first place, and would reject fundamentally the modern concept of a club (and indeed the legal obligation for floated clubs to act) as a profit maximiser. There was a clear rejection of the profit motive, not of the arrival of extra revenue or facilities *per se*: as Miles explained "I am not bothered about money coming into football and making better facilities for supporters... the problem is when money becomes the god, when it's not money coming in for the benefit of the sport, but the sport is being done for the benefit of money." The conceptual gap between this and the motives of the modern industry is enormous, and the position of INUSA, as outlined here, strikes at the heart of the modern project, and possibly comes closest to the 'anti-market' mentality exhibited by the FSA at times in its history.

Opposition to financial transformation was perhaps clearest with regard to the Sporting Club (mentioned above), a classic example of the diversification project of the modern club. An INUSA letter from John Regan to United in 1995 laid out INUSA's concerns on the Sporting Club, and included a strong attack on its principles and the ideology that underpinned it: "we do not believe that ice-hockey or football clubs can be bought or sold as commodities on the whims of businessmen and moved lock, stock and barrel

[371] INUSA Taskforce submission, 1998, Section 7, page 5

against supporters' wishes to a new home. Tradition is a very important issue in all sports."[372] This came after INUSA had sent a message of solidarity to fans of Durham Wasps, the ice-hockey club Hall bought to incorporate into the Sporting Club and physically move to Newcastle. INUSA's conceptualisation of the role of business in football, and of the nature of the club, were clearly traditional in nature, and rejected the modern diversification approach, noting that "most United supporters are only interested in football".[373] As Miles summarised the position, in a telling phrase, "we are football fans, we are not fans of a company, we do not support a financial empire, we support a football team."

In general, INUSA's approach towards United's commercial projects was to critique the motivation behind them or the way they operated, rather than the principle involved, as clear from the position taken on PPV above. With regard to merchandising, for instance, on an individual level, the overwhelming majority of the committee and members bought the replica kit themselves (on the basis possibly, as Miles noted previously, that this put money into the club), and the campaigning that INUSA have carried out on the issue lay within classic FSA consumerist paradigms of quality, price and value for money. The open letter to Hall in 1995 requested that the full details of the proposed kit changes under the recently signed Adidas deal be revealed, so that supporters would know when a kit would be out of date (based around the usual formulation of changing designs every two years). A year later, when it seemed that the away kit would be changed every year (despite previous assurances from club chief executive Freddie Fletcher to the contrary), INUSA complained and took the issue up with the club once more.[374] Equally, there were complaints about the introduction of red and white stripes on NUFC leisure-wear, and INUSA "urge[d the club] to ensure Adidas produce sufficient leisurewear without the red and white for supporters to purchase and wear with pride."[375] Clearly, merchandising was not a problem for INUSA as long as the kits retained the tradition of black and

[372] INUSA letter to John Hall, June 1995, page 3
[373] Ibid.
[374] INUSA newsletter 1996, page 2

white stripes and were used for two years; the main contribution of INUSA in this regard remained firmly within the boundaries of a consumerist paradigm, with complaints that the range of sizes for the kits was inadequate such that children were being forced to buy adult sizes.[376] The INUSA agenda did accommodate the modern policy on merchandising, and given that so many of its active members bought the kit, this is hardly surprising.

As a matter of fact, there were complaints that, in comparison to Liverpool and Manchester United, NUFC had not obtained the best possible terms from Adidas, and that "someone at the club [has] dropped a clanger."[377] There was an expectation that if NUFC were to indulge in merchandising and other commercial operations, they had at least to ensure that a reasonable price was paid by the manufacturer, a clear acceptance of the market mentality of the modern game, plus an acceptance of the competitive mentality whereby the assets of other clubs have to be matched, and if possible outstripped. The caveats INUSA had with regard to kit and merchandise were the standard FSA concerns on fair pricing and the preservation of the club's traditional colours, and to that extent the principle behind the merchandising operations was conceded: indeed, it can be argued that INUSA's attempts to make the kits as traditional and as fairly priced as possible, gesturing towards value for money mentality, in effect encouraged the acceptance of, or legitimated, such operations.

Interestingly, within that context, when asked how best United could be financed, the Manchester United model (a purely capitalist operation based on profit maximisation and notably involving merchandise) received some support from INUSA members. While the most popular option was 'democratisation' (discussed below), the next popular suggestion was along the lines of Manchester United's commercial operations, generating millions of pounds for the team and the stadium. The dominant view was for fans to run the club (which 10 members supported), plus another 4 who wanted to

[375] INUSA letter to John Hall, June 1995, page 3, emphasis added.
[376] Ibid.
[377] INUSA newsletter, 1996, page 3

see rich local fans acting as benefactors,[378] and 7 who wanted to see the club run in a self-financing way along the lines of Manchester United.

The opposition, in principle, to many modern trends among the members is significant: when asked whether success by any means (including floatation and creating nursery clubs) was acceptable, the members split 17-7 (with 2 undecided) against, suggesting a 'moral' or 'principled' core to the fandom of INUSA, a clear FSA and fanzine tradition. It is important to note this, and the way it tends to challenge the dominant (and popular) view that, when it comes to the point of decision, fans will accept whatever is necessary for their team to achieve success. Instead of NUFC's market model of the club, INUSA operated with a different mentality, as is clear from the preferred models of finance and ownership of the Castle Leazes project: as noted above, only five of the respondents supported the idea of NUFC building and owning the stadium outright, which most clearly fits the free market capitalist model of modern football. This indicates a different conception of the business side of the club from that represented by NUFC and dominant FAPL business culture.

The 1997 stock market floatation is clearly important in this context, but while a large majority of the members were opposed to it (16-4, with 3 undecided), INUSA did not actively campaign against the move, nor as an organisation did it even try to make 'the best of the situation' by buying shares to allow entry into the club's AGM (although Miles reported that three committee members were individual shareholders and attended the last AGM on that basis). The dominant view seemed to be that nothing really changed as a result of the floatation, in that the club's majority shareholders remained the majority shareholders (the Halls still owned 57% of the club after the floatation), and that the motivation for the Halls was, and always remained, personal profit. Miles indeed reported that the mood of NUFC fans in general towards the floatation was quite positive, with supporters keen to buy shares,

[378] Given that John Hall is, of course, local to Tyneside, the key word in this construction is 'fan', with the implication that a true fan, entrepreneur or otherwise, will have the best interests of the club, and particularly its supporters, at heart.

although the move cannot be seen as a 'democratising' process since most shares remained with institutions and the then Directors. It is significant that INUSA did not campaign against the floatation in any way, born maybe from the view that nothing would change: since INUSA operated with an agenda of 'democratisation' and representation for fans, then perhaps it was essentially a moot point whether the club was personally controlled by two rich directors, or by anonymous City institutions.

The agenda of 'democratisation', of fans electing representatives to a position of *real* power and influence within the club and its decision-making processes, has peppered the activities of INUSA, and, contrary to the market and business model of the modern club, represents an entirely different view of what a football club is, and should strive to achieve. The position of INUSA on this issue connects, in diverse ways, with both traditionality (with its probably mythical assumption that the working class fan owned the game in the past and needs to reclaim that power)[379] and with the FSA's focus on the true fan being the most important, trustworthy and stable source of income within the game, which in turn confers a right to representation. Both concepts were clear and implicit in INUSA's position. From the Hall and Shepherd scandal, INUSA drew the lesson that directors cannot be trusted to put the best interests of the club above their own, and that the proper remedy is for elected representatives of the fans to participate in and help actively to run the club.[380] The first of the two resolutions put to the 1998 AGM (carried unanimously and with very little debate needed), demanded fan representation at the decision-making levels of football clubs and mandated INUSA to make this an active cross-club campaign issue for the following year,[381] while INUSA argued in their submission to the Taskforce that "what football needs is control of the game to be in the hands of people whose prime concern is the welfare of the game, not of their wallets".[382]

[379] King 1997a
[380] *Electronic Telegraph*, 15 June 1998, 'Newcastle fans take stock'
[381] AGM documents, March 1998, Resolution 1, page 3
[382] INUSA Taskforce submission, 1998, Section 7, page 5

INUSA drew some inspiration from the European model of fan representation, as, for instance, operated by Barcelona and Schalke 04, and claimed, in their submission to the Taskforce, that this issue of representation and democratisation was uppermost in the minds of INUSA members. [383] The construction of the view of a club and its directors that this involves was fundamentally at odds with the approach and mentality of the business-oriented FAPL culture, in that INUSA stressed throughout that the only constant at a club is the fans, going so far as to note that NUFC supporters "are sick of being referred to by club directors and chief executives as "customers". We are not merely customers, we are supporters and moral owners of the club".[384] Importantly, within that context, Miles suggested that the needs to generate revenue, and to exercise business acumen, were not in some way incongruous or incompatible with fan control or representation, and that the model offered of NUFC was not an anti-money conception. Instead NUFC, as controlled by the fans, would be a club that made money within limits and according to the will of the fans, with the implications that such money would be spent for *the good of the club*. INUSA in principle accepted the general contours of the 'modern world' (e.g. the need for financial control, and planning), but would subordinate them to their view of the wider social and cultural meaning of a club and of fandom, the primary features that make a club the object of affection and support.

The need for fan representation was also the central lesson INUSA drew from the Taylor Report,[385] and its suggestion that clubs should take fans onto the boards of directors.[386] This not only rejects the dominant logic that business skills are more important than fan attachment, but also the entire conception of football as a business, with a business relationship with customers. The sense of community engagement and grass-roots control that such a model is predicated upon is obviously beyond what dominant culture could accept, although it is also unclear how far it touches notions of traditionality. At a superficial level, it obviously does connect with traditionality

[383] INUSA Taskforce submission, 1998, Section 3, page 2
[384] ibid., emphasis added
[385] Minutes, April 1998 committee meeting, page 2

in the sense of institutionalising the traditional view that loyal and life-long fans are the core of the club, but to what extent traditionality would accept the formalised structures that necessarily underpin successful fan control of a club, or would actively take an interest in the consequent formal procedures and systems, is not clear. Clearly this is an FSA model. The gap between INUSA and dominant norms was also very clear from the floatation section of INUSA's Taskforce submission, which argues that "football is about life, about communities, about local pride; it should not be about profits and dividends".[387] This view of the nature of football and clubs cannot accommodate the financial revolution of the 1990s, nor the transformation of clubs into businesses, and so locates INUSA in direct opposition to dominant norms. The fact that INUSA were fully prepared to see government legislative or regulatory interventions in football to ensure that fans have established and regular access to decision-making processes at clubs[388] reveals the extent of the paradigmatic gap between their world-view and that of the modern business values of the game.

Atmosphere and Terraces

As at other clubs, the issue of atmosphere was one that exercised INUSA and its members. Unlike IMUSA, however, this was not a priority issue, nor the catalyst for the group's formation in the first place.[389] But, nonetheless, INUSA did involve themselves in cross-club campaigns over terraces, standing and atmosphere that locate them in opposition to modern norms.

There seemed generally to be little genuine problem regarding standing or terraces at St James' Park, and INUSA reflected that: when INUSA was approached by IMUSA in late 1997 regarding support for their own struggle with Manchester United FC over the right to stand up during games, INUSA declined to join the active campaign (though they did support the principle) on the grounds that there was no real debate over terraces at St James' Park

[386] Lord Justice Taylor 1990
[387] INUSA Taskforce submission, 1998, Section 7, page 5
[388] INUSA Taskforce submission, 1998, conclusion, page 6
[389] 'Fair Shares', *Total Sport*, Issue 2, February 1996 (concerning the creation of IMUSA).

and no real groundswell of support for active campaigning on it.[390] Once again, this serves to highlight the need for an issue to have a direct NUFC angle before INUSA would really take it on in campaigning work, and demonstrates the central difference between INUSA and the FSA. Miles reported that "there is not a big groundswell for standing at the moment at Newcastle", which was possibly the bye-product of the changed match-day clientele at St James' Park. Equally, it is likely that there were bigger issues to consider (ticket prices for those who could still afford to get in, the antics of the directors, and so on), reinforcing the need for an issue to have, and be able to demonstrate, immediate relevance and salience before it can become an active target for campaigning work. But, generally, INUSA took an accommodating approach to the issue of terraces that, if implemented, would not only have fractured current industry logic, but would have offered some possibility of reintegrating excluded fans into active attendance at St James' Park. The effect of INUSA's position was essentially the same as the other ISAs and the FSA, namely, applying the FAPL consumer logic of choice to the issue of terraces in such a way so as to totally subvert it: Miles summarised INUSA as being "in favour of people having the right to *choose* to stand if they want to".[391] The diversity of fan experience being successively eliminated from FAPL grounds would thus be re-created, and the controls imposed on fans by stadium facilities, ticketing policies and instructions to stewards would be lifted. The traditional conception of the stadium, as an independent social space for supporters, particularly those who wanted to create an atmosphere, hits at the heart of the FAPL control and homogenisation of fan experience, and hence at its main sub-textual appeal to new spectator groups. As noted previously, the active members were predominately ex-terrace fans, and 24 of the 28-strong sample supported a return of terracing to Newcastle's next ground. The re-creation of *jouissance* is clearly visible in INUSA's work, and its clear rejection of the controlled *plaisir* agenda of NUFC and the modern game, aligns the group more directly with traditionality, with implications for a range of other issues.

[390] Minutes January 1998 committee meeting, page 2 and also discussed at the February committee meeting.
[391] Emphasis added

This was one of the issues where INUSA joined forces with other fans, supporting the FSA's Bring Back Terracing campaign in 1998, voting for the appropriate motions at the FSA annual conference and becoming signatories to the statement "we believe that all fans of all clubs should have the choice about whether to sit or stand at matches, and that provision should be made for safe standing areas at all grounds".[392] Having initially found little groundswell of opinion at St James' in favour of campaigning for terraces, INUSA later decided to become actively involved in the campaign (maybe after reports of fans being ejected from St James' Park because they were standing up in front of a corporate box), issued a public statement supporting it, and contacted other ISAs. This confirms again the need for the local element to spark INUSA interest. The focus on atmosphere was also clear from the campaign INUSA waged to have away supporters allowed into the Sunderland-Newcastle games in 1996, following a ban by Northumbria police: the *Wear United* project, conducted jointly with Sunderland fans, centred around the right to attend games and the centrality of atmosphere to the match-day experience.[393] As the 1998 AGM documentation explained, "there is now general agreement from last season's experience that derby matches without away fans just aren't the same",[394] an obviously traditional attitude that focuses the match-day experience around the noise, commitment and passion of fandom, plus the centrality of (controlled) rivalry, rather than modern detached entertainment paradigms. Together with support for terraces, such attitudes obviously locate INUSA within traditionality, and therefore in direct opposition to many FAPL values. However, the location of INUSA within such traditional paradigms is not undiluted or straightforward, and additionally draws significantly on FSA norms to generate a more inclusive and socially responsible approach; as one example, this combination would strip historically understood terrace culture of any residual racism.

[392] AGM documentation, March 1998, page 6
[393] INUSA letter from John Regan to Freddie Fletcher, December 1996
[394] AGM documents, 1998, page 8

Anti-Racism

As with these other ISAs, and the FSA, INUSA's campaigning exhibited a strong focus on anti-racism, and closely involved the group in anti-racist campaigns across the north-east. Importantly, however, this agenda was not based simply on eliminating racism from football, but used footballers much more generally as publicity weapons against racism *throughout society*: the more widely politicised general agenda that underpinned this approach is one that official football culture would clearly struggle to contend with, and would seek to steer clear of.[395] Interestingly and significantly, and more worryingly for the de-politicised, disengaged culture of the modern game, the INUSA members involved in such anti-racism work were also active anti-fascists and anti-racists before the formation of INUSA, and hence brought a sense of genuine political engagement and activism to INUSA that informed their fandom. This was instead of fans simply seeking, in a limited sense, to combat and expel racism from the specific confines of the stadium and football generally. Miles reported that NUFC had "a problem at the ground with the National Front selling stuff outside the ground in the 1980s, and Newcastle had a reputation for being one of the worst grounds for racial abuse", but that it was important that the anti-fascist movement in the region was had a clearly visible football element.

INUSA's main anti-racism work centred around two videos they produced in conjunction with Sunderland and Middlesborough fans, entitled *Show Racism the Red Card*. These were aimed at schoolchildren aged over 11 and used famous local footballers to identify anti-racism as a community (rather than a football) problem: the video spanned Europe and was widely publicised throughout the north-east. INUSA also sought to convince NUFC of the need to properly train stewards with regard to anti-racism and to ensure that complaints of racist abuse were adequately dealt with: indeed, on one occasion, the committee itself reported racist abuse heard inside St James' to the club. The issue of minority fans within St James' Park was again

[395] Clear from the punishments meted out to Liverpool's Robbie Fowler (1996) and West Ham's Ian Wright (1998) for wearing T-shirts on the pitch that bore political messages supporting local workers involved in industrial disputes.

complicated by its restricted capacity, but, this apart, INUSA positively welcomed more minority spectators in the ground.[396] The question was also one that INUSA addressed in its Taskforce submission, where it suggested the need for proper training of stewards, and for the media to end their stereotypical coverage of foreign players. This last point (aimed at the tabloid press) is clearly a non-traditional attitude, as was INUSA's approach in general: the sense of genuine political engagement within INUSA over this issue visibly sits outside both traditionality and FAPL culture, in different but significant ways. Instead INUSA generally operated from standard FSA discourses (or even beyond them, given the personal extent of anti-racist work outside football), conceptualising the club as a legitimate site of socially-aware political struggle. While clubs are keen to be *seen* to be taking action on racism, the heavily politicised roots of INUSA's anti-racist work, their clear attempts to politicise the club and players, and use them as levers on public opinion are well beyond the limits of what a FAPL club could consider valid. The FAPL construction of fans as de-politicised and disengaged, and concerned with entertainment and consumption, is not one that can effectively accommodate the political and ideological content of INUSA's attitudes on anti-racism. However, the focus on racism was one that most historically understood strands of traditionality clearly cannot accommodate either, partly since the de-politicised aspect of traditionality would reject the engaged nature of the struggle, and partly because of the obvious clash with racist white working-class discourses.

Equally interesting was the fact that despite this anti-racist focus and the energy invested in the issue, INUSA had no active minority members at all, and while this can be partly explained by the relatively small minority population on Tyneside, it does highlight the genuinely engaged and politically aware nature of INUSA's approach to the issue. The extent to which INUSA members supported the issue, both in the internal context of the group and NUFC, and also more generally within the wider framework of these ISAs here, can be seen in the fact that of the members surveyed,

[396] INUSA Taskforce submission 1998, page 2

seven explicitly mentioned anti-racism as a priority issue that INUSA should actively campaign upon, making it the second most popular campaign idea behind ticket prices (highlighted by eighteen members) and 'democratisation' of NUFC (also mentioned by seven). A quarter of the membership sample may not seem particularly high, but in reality, this is a significant figure given the traditionally apolitical nature of fandom, both in the past and present, and the general reluctance to contribute to debates and campaigns that did not have football as their central and primary focus.

Contestation

It may reasonably be argued that INUSA's focus on certain motivations in modern football seeks an unlikely combination of a restrictive anti-profit morality with the financial business interests of the game. Yet, on a range of issues, INUSA divorced specific transformations in football from the business motivations that, in reality, inspired their creation (PPV, the new stadium, merchandising), and sought instead to inject much more engaged discourses of genuine social inclusion, of the notion of the club as an authentic part of the community and region, and of the idea of football as a social institution, not a business unit, into everything that the club did and do. All this is, in many ways, conceptually divorced from what football has become in the 1990s, and is in direct opposition to the conceptual underpinnings of the modern game.

The important, modern focus on money and profit as ends, particularly for directors, was clearly rejected, and in line with FSA culture, INUSA's point of focus was instead on the maintenance of multiple social spaces within the ground, and on the freedom of expression for a range of groups: while INUSA did not fall into the trap of arguing that white working class men have become an oppressed minority in the face of discourses of rights for minority groups and women, it defended the right of 'ordinary' fans to express themselves and congregate together in a traditional construction of football as a social institution primarily (though not exclusively) for the working classes. This culture has, of course, been mediated by FSA values like anti-racism, and an opposition to violence. There was a strong element of

jouissance in the culture that INUSA's stadium would create, tolerate or actively support, while rejecting the effects of the business processes penetrating football and the market mentality that underpin them. A shorthand version of INUSA norms would be the need to preserve and generate a plurality of social spaces and backgrounds, rather than the increasingly exclusive and homogenous culture and background of St James' Park. It is in this sense of the relationship *between* types of fans and the relative respect and influence accorded to each, that much of what INUSA did and supported must be considered.

There was generally an air of a mix of traditionality and of FSA values about INUSA, and there was little about their work, attitudes or approach that fully concurred with the modern football project. Once more, their agenda was more progressive and socially aware on various questions than that of the club (as on racism and demography, for instance). Clearly, charges of nostalgia and mystified traditions often levelled at opponents of the modern game cannot be made against INUSA with any justification.

Chapter Seven – Fandom, football and fans: analysis and conclusions

The brave new world is beckoning, so the olden world must die[397]

In this chapter, the key findings of the preceding analysis are collated, with a view to considering some central issues, namely the organisational features of ISAs; the role and place of the ISA within the history of fan groups; the role of the excluded fan within an ISA; the nature of class in football and the class-relations role/position of the ISA in football; and the nature of resistance exhibited by ISAs towards modern football culture.

Organisational Features

Central to the operations of these four case-study ISAs are some common organisational features: primary amongst these was a strong reliance on key individuals, in that a great deal of ISA work, and the development of general ISA strategies, was carried out by a small number of people, and in large measure, the effectiveness of the group essentially depended on their goodwill, energy and organising skills.[398] It is quite evident that, without the commitment of such key individuals, these ISAs would have been unable to carry out much of their operations, or even exist. Furthermore, the contingent personality and agenda of these key members was a strong determinatory factor for the character of each group, and to some extent, helped shape, if not also define, the work of each. In the case of LCISA, all its active work concerning LCFC (notably over the stadium) depended on three individuals, and any interaction with fans of other clubs was entirely down to one member. Equally, without three key individuals, much of INUSA's work would suffer or disappear, and most of SISA's day-to-day campaigning was left entirely to its central players (leader McMillan, editor of *The Ugly Inside* fanzine, Clive Foley, and Richard Chorley), with the wider membership stepping into the fray only when the club or team faced a clear, immediate threat, although BIFA was more widely-based. This factor is significant not just in terms of the scope and quality of ISA work, but, more importantly, in

[397] Lyric by New Model Army, from 'The Charge', *Thunder and Consolation*, EMI 1989

the cultural importance of ISAs within football, and in defining the role of ISAs in the 'democratisation' of football.[399]

Rather than being high-activism groups built around strong grass-roots involvement, the evidence from these groups suggests that the ISA movement is relatively narrow-based, with the majority of members forming a backdrop that can be summoned into action when needed, but who otherwise remain essentially inactive. This is visible, for instance, in the almost complete absence of contested elections to the ISA committees. As a result of these low levels of activism and interaction with members, and the latter's reluctance to become involved, there is limited substance to the claim that ISAs can genuinely 'democratise' the relations between fan and club, though this is hardly a new development in the history of fan groups.[400] While ISAs can create substantive fan access to club decision-making processes ('democratisation'), their members seem reluctant to contribute to the first stage of any such democratisation, that is, supplying a 'bottom-up' flow of views and issues to raise with the club. The agenda the ISAs take to their clubs, therefore, are set by a relatively small number of people. With these points in mind, it is fair to suggest that ISAs instead operate, in essence, as pressure groups, with a small, committed core of activists who set the agenda and participate in club decision-making process in ways the ISA membership level may not actually justify (though of course, there is no necessary or logical connection between the activism of members, the size of a group, and its right to a voice and a role).

Levels of activism are a useful indicator of some of these features of ISAs, and of the movement's wider significance in the cultural politics of football: most members clearly trust the committee and refrain from active involvement and participation in ISAs' everyday work, with their own contribution contingently shaped by the changing contexts of the club. While this reliance on a committed well-organised core is also a feature of FSA

[398] Confirming Brown's view on the role of an active minority: Brown 1998, page 64
[399] ibid.
[400] Taylor 1992

regional branches, it is striking how far the majority of active ISA members ('active' denoting those who attended meetings) were prepared to remain in the background, ready to come to the fore only when faced with a visibly major issue. Table Five below highlights the levels of activism among active ISA members, and the respective activities they became involved in.

Table Five: Involvement of active members within the four ISAs (n=92)

ACTIVITY	NUMBERS OF MEMBERS INVOLVED (and % of total)
Attendance at meetings	58 (63%)
Committee work/chairperson	12 (13%)
Administration	10 (11%)
Campaign work	5 (5%)
Fund-raising activities	4 (4%)
Liaison with other fans	3 (3%)
TOTAL	**92 (100%)**

The limited involvement of the majority (essentially restricted to attending meetings) creates a strong reliance on each committee. Of course, attending meetings helps the ISA gain some standing with the club and media, just as raising finance to sustain the group can be seen as genuine support, but this is as far as it goes: activism was generally prompted and shaped by the context around the club, not by any sense of political mission or abstract commitment.

The ISA structure and mode of operation were little different from the FSA, or indeed pressure groups generally. The single point of significant divergence from the FSA is the ISA's club-based *raison d'être*: this emphasis, and the fact that members knew they would be interacting with fans of their own club, are important contributory factors to the growth of ISAs, and were clearly visible in their active campaigning. While these ISAs have addressed national and cross-club issues, this forms a small proportion of their work compared to club-based work, connecting the ISAs in an important way with an essential feature of traditionality, namely a hostility towards, contempt for, or refusal to co-operate with, supporters of other clubs. Everything else about the ISAs (their 'feel', sense of mission and preferred relationship with the

club) are also found in FSA agenda. The level of self-consciousness involved in this similarity is a moot point, and the latter could be the consequence of the institutional conservatism resulting from the ISA desire for a long-term role in important decision-making processes. Given the unprecedented scale of its success compared to any other fan group, it is not surprising to see the FSA provide a model of organisation and ethos. Equally however, there has been criticism from 'ordinary' fans at its slowness, tendency to talk too much and 'do' too little (see *supra*, Chapter One), and certain political aspects of its agenda, so the ISAs could equally have been expected to reject this model. Instead, they essentially bought into nearly everything the FSA ever sought to do, and were it not for their club-based structure, would be identical to it.[401]

Another important, common factor was personal political involvement. Clearly, the ISAs were aware of the need not to become overtly political: McMillan explicitly identified interest in Southampton FC as a prerequisite for anyone seeking involvement within SISA, preventing it from being purely politicised: "the biggest thing that fans will always see through is political activists handing out political leaflets around a ground on match-day; if they can't tell you who the team is that day, then they aren't going to win any support." Pinto also reported worries about any attempts by political organisations to take over BIFA. But key individuals in INUSA, BIFA and SISA all had/have a political background, experience, activism or training (while Andy Buckingham of LCISA had trade union experience), which often directly informs their tactics, attitudes and indeed, in very broad terms, contribution to ISA agenda. Significantly, there are overlaps between these personal politics and the stance the ISA took on various issues. The political background of key individuals clearly impacts on the ISA's work, in terms of commitment, organisation, energy, time and money invested in it, even if not in its precise stance on any given issue. INUSA, in particular, carried a political edge, with Miles and others active organisers for the Socialist Party, plus others who had been anti-fascist and anti-racist activists long before the

[401] Clear from resolutions passed at the 1998 FSA Annual Conference (May 1998, Wolverhampton) to merge the FSA and ISAs, and the creation of the Coalition of Football Supporters, formed in 1999, including amongst others the FSA, IMUSA, BIFA and INUSA.

creation of INUSA, which has obvious implications for INUSA's general stance on anti-racism. While none of these groups had, or indeed could, become 'purely' political organisations (that is, detached from, or out of touch with, the fan issues that were their *raison d'être*), there was a certain 'moral' or ideological element clearly present in BIFA, SISA and INUSA that, in part, can be attributed to the sense of political mission of key individuals.

Such awareness was also visible in the greater consciousness of wider football issues found amongst the committee when compared to the general membership, who focused heavily on issues around their club, as highlighted by Table Six below (detailing the issues the members wanted to see addressed):[402] while some of these matters can obviously form part of national or cross-club campaigns (like prices or terraces), generally, there was nothing in the members' agenda that genuinely transcends the local focus, or concerns the game *in toto* or in abstract.

Table Six: Issues raised by members as priorities, across all four ISAs (n=92)

ISSUE	NUMBER OF MEMBERS WHO MENTIONED IT (and % of total members across the four ISAs)
Ticket prices/systems	45 (48.9%)
Ground move or changes	32 (34.8%) - 14 SISA, 6 INUSA, 9 BIFA members
Representation of fans	21 (22.8%) - 9 SISA and 10 BIFA members
'Whatever the fans think'	12 (13%)
Anti-racism	10 (10.9%) - 7 INUSA
Merchandise/kits	10 (10.9%)
Democratisation of club	7 - all INUSA
Atmosphere/terracing	6
Travel to games	5
Monitoring the club	3
Club and members	2
Exclusion	2
Getting information to fans	1
Maintaining club traditions	1
Police/stewarding issues	1
Disabled access	1
Anti-corporate hospitality	1
Anti-sexism	1

[402] These figures relate to all ISA members surveyed: they are slightly skewed by the sample of clubs and the timeframe of the research, since stadium redevelopment or relocation was then an active issue at all four clubs. However, these answers were all freely chosen by members, and not prompted by the questionnaire (see Appendix One) or researcher; they can therefore be considered genuinely representative of active members' priorities.

Contrasting this agenda with ISAs' actual campaigning work reveals that some important elements of it do not coincide with members' priorities. While the two agenda do not diverge in serious ways, and the committee do not force the members to focus on issues they actively oppose, there are clear differences of emphasis that suggest an ideological gap. Perhaps the best case in point is anti-racism: mentioned by only ten of the 92 members (seven of whom were INUSA members - see *supra,* Chapter Six), anti-racism was clearly not a major priority for the members of BIFA, LCISA and SISA, yet these groups took it as seriously as INUSA, where it was a priority. Equally, the total absence of disabled fans amongst active ISA ranks makes it unsurprising that the members did not prioritise issues pertaining to disabled supporters (only highlighted by 1 out of 92 members): yet, again, all four ISAs supported the rights of disabled fans, wanted to see their stadia designed with their needs in mind, and actively took these issues up with their clubs.

Generally speaking, there are no disagreements on the central issues: Table Six above only confirms the ISA's club-centred ethos, and the centrality of issues that directly and visibly affect the members. The agenda outlined in Table Six clearly does not fit the FSA national and cross-club focus, which probably explains why so few ISA members ever joined the FSA. The generally high level of common ideological ground between the ISAs and FSA, and the very limited cross-over of members, confirms that the ISA focus is central to its appeal to fans, which equally explains the failure of the FSA to attract such members: the fact that, for instance, Newcastle United supporters would be co-operating with Sunderland, Middlesborough, Darlington and Hartlepool fans in a north-east FSA branch made it, to most INUSA members, far less attractive. As Miles noted, 'we have got members who say 'I am not interested in meeting f***ing Mackems [Sunderland fans] or Mancs [Manchester United], all I am interested in is Newcastle fans'. The use of derogatory terms like 'Mackems' and 'Mancs', plus the swearing, is in itself instructive, indicative of an oppositional approach with roots in traditionality.

Given this context, and the fact that the ISAs often address issues of relatively minor interest to members, it may be that the role of key individuals is more important than might otherwise appear: in some instances, this personal element can indeed be seen as the driving force behind the development of the ISA and its agenda, particularly over long-term issues like a new stadium (SISA, LCISA) or anti-racism (all four ISAs). The paradoxical position of this latter topic (not a priority for the members, but an active issue for the leadership) can only be understood if the role of the personal attributes of some key members is highlighted, recognised and fore-grounded in analysis. This has obvious implications for the overall significance of the ISA movement: if the personal element found in this sample of ISAs is common and important throughout the movement, the overall cultural importance of ISAs must, to that degree, diminish, in that they cannot be seen as a mass of fans coming together for clearly defined and focused cultural purposes (cultural in the sense of 'issues'). While all the ISAs had this personal element to some degree, LCISA have been particularly shaped by it: not created with a broad-based oppositional or cultural agenda, but through the focused agenda of two or three key members, LCISA has intervened in, and helped shape, Leicester City's decision-making process in ways its members are not genuinely interested in (discussed further below).

More generally, all the issues in Table Six, apart from anti-racism and access for the disabled, can be related to actions of individual clubs, or were activated by events and perceived problems at clubs: the context thus fundamentally shapes the agenda of ISA members, and highlights their reactive nature, rather than the presence of any closely focused class-based or ideological agenda. Moreover, Table Six also demonstrates the immediate importance of the local impact of a policy in galvanising an ISA into action, while also confining it to the 'art of the possible': while there was disquiet at the financial imbalance created across the professional divisions by the various television rights contracts signed with Sky, it was only when it started to directly impact on fans' experiences (primarily through alterations to the fixture list) that it became a live issue. As Pinto reported, BIFA saw Sky as

"something that can be positive, it can show what a club Sheffield United are, the atmosphere we have, but when that means we have a drop in crowds, the games can be re-arranged and people are unable to go because of commitments they have already made, I think that [BIFA's] line has changed", generating "a distinct change in policy". It was only when Sky's 1996 deal with the Nationwide League started to unambiguously affect United fans that it became a live and 'possible' issue for BIFA. There was, in this sense, no room for abstract issues, or matters of principle: a good example is terracing, which was a relatively low priority issue for members. This could superficially be taken as support for all-seater stadia, were it not for the fact that, when asked directly, a strong majority in all four ISAs supported terraces and/or standing areas (discussed below). This contradiction between the support for terraces and its low status as an active campaign issue can only be explained if members (consciously or otherwise) divide fan issues into the possible and impossible, and see terraces as an impossible battle. There was an obvious reluctance to address unattainable or distant objectives, and instead the ISAs were fundamentally shaped by the possible and the immediately relevant.

It is interesting to note the general homogeneity of the priorities of members across these ISAs. The one exception to this was 'democratisation', which, as democratic control, was an issue for INUSA members: but even this can be related to contingent facts, namely the antics of Hall and Shepherd, which led INUSA to seek a re-organisation of NUFC's shareholdings to provide for democratic control. The fact that the other three ISAs highlighted fan representation suggests that events at St James' Park pushed INUSA beyond this intermediary stage to full-blown democratisation: certainly, this was consciously and deliberately the main lesson that INUSA drew from the scandal (see *supra,* Chapter Six). With this exception, all four ISAs operated with similar agenda, and sought to address similar problems and issues: instead of creating different agenda, the different positions the four clubs occupy within the football pyramid (see *supra*, Chapter Two) seemed to generate differences of *emphasis*. Throughout this period, Sheffield United were in greater financial trouble than any of the other clubs, and had more

need of money than the other clubs,[403] making BIFA more ready to accept change and diversification if it ensured United's existence. Pinto noted, for instance, "a spread [of opinions within BIFA], because there will be those who will say 'we shouldn't really complain because there has never been a vision for this club, and one shouldn't gripe that the new board and the new company involved in SUFC want to bring out a more commercial plan and vision for the club, and the other activities and entertainments that come with this... leisure park." The context United found itself in forced BIFA to adopt a less 'principled' agenda, as the economic 'reality' of the club's circumstances restricted their scope for 'ideological' thinking. Generally however, the active members evidently addressed the same issues and questions across the ISAs, and given the substantial differences in the circumstances of their clubs, this uniformity is somewhat surprising, and suggests that the issues that inspire activism are, by and large, similar across the top two divisions, and that while contexts are important in shaping ISA attitudes and agenda, they are not the defining factor as might have been expected.

Class

So far as class as a conceptual category is concerned, there are two basic questions. First, to what extent are the ISAs the "class" response of excluded or disaffected working class (male) fans to the transformation of football, and, second, how can the aggregated culture of an individual ISA be related to traditional working class male forms of fandom? When combined, these two issues highlight the precise nature of the class relationship between ISAs and football, and the place of the movement in the wider history of fan groups.

The evident similarities between the FSA and ISAs have potential implications for the class nature of the latter, and the evidence here suggests they are not the repository of the excluded or disenfranchised: instead they represent fans in relatively stable employment who still regularly get into matches: quite simply, there are not enough excluded fans within active ISA

[403] In 1998, the manager had to sell three valuable players to avoid a financial crisis; *Daily Mirror*, 3 Oct 1998, *Football Fever*, page 3, 'Bruce told: sell stars', and resigned seven months later in protest at player sales; (*Sporting Life*, http://www.sporting-

ranks to allow any other conclusion. When asked whether ticket price rises had affected their attendance patterns, 45 of the 64 members of SISA, INUSA and BIFA[404] reported that they had not, and only 19 had. None had been completely excluded. A number (including members of the committees) did note problems with the cost of away tickets, or with taking children to games, and suggested that if ticket prices continued to rise, their attendance patterns would be affected, but, in view of recent price increases, this is hardly surprising. Instead, most of the difficulties that members encountered with regard to tickets were attributable to restricted stadium capacities. In the main, it is clear that active ISA members can still regularly attend fixtures, which in the current climate evidently attests to their higher, or more stable, economic status. While ISA sub-culture and values were more central to this research than the social composition of the ISAs, and so direct questions on economic status were not asked, it is still possible to conclude that the active ISA members, particularly committee members, were obviously still very active fans: only one active member of any of the committees appeared to be unemployed. In all four groups, there was a high concentration of season ticket holders, and many members regularly went on away trips (itself an expensive business).[405] Committee and rank-and-file members of BIFA and INUSA were present in force at the (ever more expensive) FA Cup semi-final played between the two clubs in 1998, INUSA members were well represented at the Cup Final at Wembley the following month, while LCISA members attended the Coca-Cola Cup Final (and replay) in 1997, and members of both groups travelled on their clubs' European trips in 1997 and 1998 (to Spain and Holland, trips that are kept artificially expensive by the clubs). Pinto noted that 'most of the [BIFA] Steering Committee go to probably more than half the away games in the season, and some... actually get to every game'. This evidence is in addition to the failed BIFA away travel club (see *supra*, Chapter Three) that highlighted the prevalence of car use.

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life.com/soccer/99/05/17/SOCCER_Sheff_Utd_Snap.html)

[404] An administrative error meant LCISA members were not directly asked this question.

[405] The average Newcastle ticket in 1996-97 cost £19, Southampton £17 and Leicester City £14 (Carling 1997, figure 15.2) but many away grounds are much more expensive (in 1998-99, away tickets at Tottenham cost £29, Newcastle £26 and Nottingham Forest £28, and in

It was never credible to expect the winners in football's transformation (corporate, family and professional elements) to find the ISA movement relevant or meaningful. But, more importantly, the evidence of occupational and employment status within the ISA movement points to the general absence within it of the excluded or struggling working class fans. It is safe to conclude that the movement, certainly within its active ranks, is essentially the preserve of upper working or lower middle class fans, with a smattering of professionals, sporting mobile phones, personal computers, and home and work Internet connections. This is further confirmed by the issue of technology: BIFA have their own Internet homepage, and in 1998 INUSA discussed setting up one too, while a significant number of fans across these ISAs are online. Of the twenty-eight online BIFA members in August 1998,[406] six had university-based email addresses (only one was a student), five used company addresses, and seventeen had home-based addresses (*via* connection to server networks, with all the regular financial outlay this entails). Nine of these twenty-eight also served on the committee. This profile (though clearly not necessarily representative of BIFA generally) offers some indication as to who is involved. Leaders of these ISAs included the leader of a major city council Labour Party group (who also held a high-ranking administrative post at a major university), another administrator within a university, a union representative who was made redundant and became a taxi driver, and another taxi driver who occupied a 'functional' role as a fanzine editor, a freelance journalist, a civil servant, a revenue inspector and an entrepreneur: on the basis of this evidence, there is no essential unity of the class backgrounds of the ISA leadership, save that they were not from the excluded element of the crowd struggling to raise the price of a ticket. Other highly active members worked as teachers (with a university education), writers, accountants, or ran service-oriented companies or pubs (one also worked in a pub) and so on.

1996-97, West Ham cost £24). An away trip of course incurs other significant costs.
[406] Listed at *http://www.bifa.org*, 'Contacting BIFA'

However, fans in the ISAs generally considered themselves 'traditional' (of the 53 members asked whether this was the case, 45 said it was),[407] with the implicit class implications that flow from this: this focus was equally found within the various committees. King found a similar sentiment among the United lads he interviewed, and contrasted that self-ascribed label to the largely sedentary jobs they worked in.[408] Perhaps all this only points to a different perspective, namely that class is not exclusively an economic consideration, and that identity is subjectively constructed from fragments of one's lived experience, cultural factors and influences. Savage suggests that 'membership of class does not guarantee any particular form of social action',[409] arguing that socio-cultural identity is an important aspect of class formation. While there have been numerous attacks on class as an explanatory tool for the study of consumption-based Western societies, if it can be shown that ISA members do operate with class-based discourses and view class as a defining variable within the modern game, then class remains a useful tool with which to approach the ISA movement, particularly if class is understood as more than just an economic category. Whether the members of INUSA or any other fan group are 'objectively' working class or not is less important than that they consider themselves to be working class, and operate with what can be shown to be working class norms. There is indeed clear evidence from these members of a class-based agenda, such as their conception of the FAPL project, their self-identification as 'traditional' fans, their expectation that the ISA will defend 'traditional working class fans and traditional concepts of fan behaviour', and support for terraces and traditional working class forms of expression etc.

The absence of active members excluded from live attendance (or who were approaching such a state of exclusion) is a key finding of this research. It is interesting to note that it was only at INUSA, containing fans of the most aggressively capitalist of these clubs, that a significant visibly excluded element was ever reported amongst the ISA membership. Buckingham did

[407] Administrative errors meant LCISA and BIFA members were not directly asked this question.
[408] King 1997a, page 338

note a few non-season ticket holders who joined LCISA in order to take advantage of the group's collectivised priority card scheme to obtain match tickets, but generally, only INUSA appeared to have contained a visible element whose activism was motivated by *personal* exclusion, for which there are a number of possible explanations: exclusion may generate contempt, and prompt resignation and withdrawal, as opposed to organised resistance and commitment; second, excluded fans who joined in the early stages of their displacement (as Miles reports at INUSA) may find it increasingly disheartening to participate in an ISA concerned with a club that no longer has room for them or that has eliminated the cultural practices central to their fandom; third, perhaps they did not appreciate the ISA's respectable approach and tactics. Miles' account of INUSA membership trends, noting that excluded fans were visibly present at the start but soon ceased to be genuine activists, makes a certain sense in terms of expected reactions by the excluded or disaffected to their condition, and highlights the ways in which fandom and fan interest change during a period of exclusion.

Since this sample contains no members who have ceased to attend, or whose attendance patterns have been seriously affected by football's transformation, it is hard to theorise the relationship between exclusion, fandom and activism with any certainty, but the evidence available suggests that, where fans do not attend matches over a period of time, or where they find the match-day experience increasingly dissatisfying, they are unlikely to involve themselves for any length of time in engaged activity like membership of an ISA. If nothing else, such activism may appear to offer, on the face of it, little hope of changing the club's direction, and particularly, little short-term chance of alleviating their personal exclusion (which was most relevant at Southampton, Newcastle and Leicester). This may well create a credibility gap, a sense amongst the excluded that an ISA cannot successfully fight the forces creating exclusion, so eliminating its legitimacy. Activism in a pressure group can be a response to a particular set of circumstances, or is born from a sense of personal mission or commitment: in view of the strength of the

[409] Savage 1995, page 22

forces re-shaping football, there is little sense in which the ISA, on the face of it, can appear powerful enough to resist elements of transformation, and hence, superficially, there may well appear little point in joining. More importantly, it is hard to see how activism in a fan group such as an ISA can be sustained through a period of exclusion, given that the first and most passionately followed topic of discussion in all the ISA meetings focussed on the team and its latest performances. If the central force cementing the social relationships within the ISA (active communal match-day experiences), is absent or declining, then the excluded will lack the major bond within any ISA. The common ISA discourses that centred on matches and team performances, that shaped and maintained the relationships formed amongst members through active membership, will *de facto* marginalise from key parts of the ISA 'experience' those already excluded from live attendance.

Equally, it is possible that the excluded, whose fandom may well have been centred around ecstatic communal participation and collectivity, are increasingly finding the TV experience of fandom altogether more satisfying, in that it allows for the creation of spaces where such expressive and participatory behaviour (what King calls 'masculine')[410] is culturally and spatially possible. It is plausible to argue that, confronted by the changes in football and presented with an alternative to attendance that ties in more closely with their fandom, excluded fans will settle to a new experience. In this way, they may no longer miss the match-day experience, and so may not actually be seeking a return to their previous patterns of attendance, with obvious implications for ISAs. This attitude is visible even among some fans who still attend: Liverpool fans attending a game at West Ham in 1998

[410] King 1997a, page 338. It is hard to see how such expression can be simply collapsed into masculinity, given that women did stand on terraces, and did participate in the ways King asserts to be masculine. The evidential gap in the pre-1993 crowd demography generally allows some fairly sexist assumptions to be unproblematically accepted, like the Leicester suggestion of the need to 'feminise' the crowd to defeat hooliganism (1988). King's theorisation of IMUSA as a 'lads' group is equally hard to accept given that six of the eight IMUSA delegates at the 1998 FSA conference were women, aged from mid-20s to early 50s, and all fully supportive of the pro-terraces campaign and the right to 'ecstatic' participation. Equally, the leader of the campaign to save terraces at Anfield found that about 40% of its active participants were female (interview with the author, 1998). Certainly the numbers of women on the Kop were higher, from personal recollection if nothing else, than modern football's more blatant apologists can admit.

watched the concluding minutes on TV screens in the concourse just yards from the seats they had paid £26 for, where they could interact with each other and the game in ways of their choosing rather than those dictated by seats, seating arrangements, stewards and police. It is also possible to argue that the excluded will start to lose interest in football *per se* over the period of their exclusion, rendering the ISA as irrelevant as other elements of the game.

However another, better, reason, is the culture of the excluded: it is hard to envisage working class lads (those increasingly excised from modern stadia, or who never formed regular attendance habits) tolerating, particularly in moments of crisis, the long-winded talk about amendments, the de-personalised debates and formalised agenda that form the backbone of ISA work, or the polite discourses inherent in meeting club officials, and various levels of political leadership. Such inclusive and conciliatory tactics, visible in the way each ISA deliberately sought out meetings with clubs in a spirit of co-operation (initially anyway) seem outside working class discourses. This is not to say that the lads cannot accept the 'polite' tactics of ISAs: IMUSA seems to have a significant number of lads in its ranks,[411] but importantly, it is equally noticeable that IMUSA often trades in publicity,[412] and relies on a mix of experienced political activists and university-educated campaigners. In general, the tactics and approach adopted by the lads towards their clubs (with little regard for the niceties of debate, or the way their actions can be construed by a hostile and sensationalist media) do not fit the avowed and actual practices of these ISAs, who *deliberately* positioned themselves outside, and in opposition to, such discourses. It is significant that a radical 'lads' element, actively seeking to convert the ISA to more militant agenda, surfaced at both BIFA and SISA during their most bitter campaigns, but having been prevented from driving the ISA in this direction, they withdrew. This suggests a divergence of tactics related to class (a preparedness to resort to the physical, 'intimidatory' approach), maybe explaining why the

[411] King 1997a
[412] Like publicly burning BSkyB's official bid for United (*Granada Reports*, 12 October 1998)

ISAs lack the very people they often concern themselves with, who, as the victims of transformation might be expected to participate.

None of these ISAs would tolerate traditional approaches towards campaigning (noted in previous chapters, at Manchester City and Brighton, and recently at Doncaster, Portsmouth, Swindon, Burnley and City again),[413] and were at pains to ensure that all campaigning was controlled. McMillan noted how SISA had contained "quite a few loose cannons... people who wanted to kidnap the manager and all sorts of things, car park protests that were getting out of hand. So it was very important... if [SISA] was going to have any credibility especially with the media... [that] you could organise yourself in a proper way." Generally, BIFA had a similar problem during their campaign against Brealey, and repeatedly emphasised the need not to project a violent or irresponsible image: as Pinto explained "we had to be very very serious, and... look at ways in which [campaign ideas] would be misconstrued." To this extent, the ISA exemplification of 'bourgeois' civility, respect and a preparedness to listen to opponents make them unlikely vehicles for excluded working class fans. The backgrounds of fans who advocate kidnapping the manager or stand outside the directors' box for hours after a game and chant or shout abuse seems obvious, and the resolute ISA refusal to employ such tactics, and divert their more 'excitable' members from them does point to particular class values and background. Equally, the voluntarism and personal commitment inherent in ISA operations may be out of place in lower working class lifestyles anyway, making these groups unattractive to those most affected by exclusion.[414]

[413] Trouble at Doncaster was reported in *Guardian*, 12 October 1998, 'Living in hope of Rovers' return', Sports section, page 5; at Burnley on *North West Tonight*, BBC 1, 19 October 1998; at Swindon in *Times*, 25 September 1998, 'Swindon plan life ban on protestors'; and at Portsmouth, *Telegraph*, 14 December 1998, *http://www.telegraph.co.uk*, 'Fans vent anger at player sale'.

[414] Similar trends are visible for instance in studies of community participation in urban regeneration, clearly a much more concrete issue than football fandom: Munck *et al* (1999) note that in the heavily depressed working class Speke area of Liverpool, local men were very reluctant to become actively involved in voluntaristic community work. 1999, page 28.

1990s Football: the ISA as response to transformation

It is abundantly clear that the hypothesis postulating a causal link between specific impacts of transformation and the growth of ISAs in the 1990s is generally not borne out by the evidence from these ISAs; instead the classic journalistic view that fans only get stirred up by a bad team carries a certain validity. While all these ISAs obviously engage with issues created, and contextualised, by 1990s transformation, the specific features of that transformation generally were not the spark behind their creation. Given the scale and nature of the changes in the game, one might have expected greater activism and involvement from ISA members, and a greater sense of political engagement with transformation. Instead, the shifts to football's 'cultural politics' were often submerged by a focus on the team. In only one ISA was it purely, or even primarily, the transformation of the club that sparked its creation: instead, the major spark for the creation of BIFA and SISA (though not the only one) was dissatisfaction with the attitude or abilities of the manager or directors, the failings of the team, and general fears for the future of the club. In both cases, political issues were initially dragged into the ISA's work on the back of football matters: indeed, to some extent, those seeking a wider agenda knew that activism inside the group would always primarily flow from team affairs, but that the political issues could be activated along with them, and that the football issues could legitimate a later wider focus on essentially political and cultural matters. As McMillan noted, "it was important not just to get sucked into a 'sack the manager' situation. There were many other aspects that we wanted to discuss with the board." Equally, however, that it took opposition to the board and manager to crystallise opposition on other issues into an organised campaign is itself significant (as evidenced by the failed attempt to set up SISA two years before it was created, when the team was performing better and the manager was more popular). BIFA, to some extent, occupy similar territory to this. LCISA sit outside such discourses, at least in terms of its creation, since it was formed to generate a closer relationship with LCFC and establish a network of City fans around Northampton, not out of any particular dissatisfaction with the club. The transformation-based spark for an

ISA is only true of INUSA, where transformation created instability and disquiet: in this way, INUSA stands out as exceptional.

Generally, only after the football issues had been aired, and a formal space created in which fans could interact, and develop relationships and a sense of the collective, could the political aspects of a fan group's work develop. These latter elements depend on the existence and strength of football issues if they are to be genuinely articulated and activated in football's cultural politics. Even this expansion of horizons requires careful planning, to ensure that the energy generated by 'football' issues did not dissipate once they had been dealt with: in these terms, the history of these ISAs has been one of struggle to maintain a role in the eyes of supporters (and so preserve membership levels). As Pinto explained, BIFA generally found it "harder to argue for our *raison d'être* [post-Brealey], because people think, 'Well, we've got a new chairman in, we've got new directors in, the John Street stand is being built, we've money to spend in the bank, we've got this huge leisure park, business plans being put forward, why do we need an ISA?'."

However despite Ian Taylor's suggestion, there have been fan reactions to transformation: his assertion that the only genuine opposition to change in the 1990s occurred at West Ham is simply wrong,[415] as is the implicit inference that if fans do not campaign against change, logically, they support it. Before Taylor's article, there had been a well documented campaign against transformation at Tottenham, and bitter struggles over stadium redevelopment at Arsenal and West Ham,[416] while the switch to all-seater stadia at Liverpool sparked a year-long pro-terrace campaign from fans seeking to maintain aspects of the 'traditional' about their match-day experience. The failure of the majority of these campaigns should not be allowed to overshadow their nature or significance, nor the simple fact that fans *did* organise in defence of cultural practices: furthermore, it is significant that in nearly every case, the focus of opposition was what was perceived as the clubs' business-driven agenda, or the finance for it.

[415] Taylor 1995, page 20
[416] Brown 1998, Ruben 1993

It is interesting that much of the most passionate organised resistance in the 1990s pre-dates 1994, when the elimination of terraces from the top two divisions accelerated and innovated the processes of transformation began in 1992. Post-terracing, there are few cases of campaigning groups forming in reaction to transformation, with the exception of Manchester United. 1994 represents a highly symbolic moment, confirmation in bricks and mortar that the game had 'changed' and that the battle for the soul of football had been lost, and when those adversely affected by transformation (recognising their defeat) either withdrew, or focussed on maintaining their own limited space within football's rapidly changing cultural milieux.

More generally, there is, of course, significant scope for explaining this general lack of organised resistance to change in British sport via the latter's thorough de-politicisation, making it conceptually difficult for fans to adopt political stances unless, or until, the team performed badly and so had already generated controversy, anger or frustration. As Hargreaves argues, "it is commonly assumed that sport should not and indeed cannot have anything to do with such sordid matters as politics and power struggles and that it is sullied when they become entangled."[417] Without the 'genuine' sport issues of the team and the manager, the political issues fans address when engaging with transformation become very hard to successfully articulate in any broad sense. When combined with the conceptualisation of sport as a source of enjoyment, and an antidote to the problems of modern existence, the de-politicisation of sport acts as a powerful bulwark against the mobilisation of supporters against change within professional football: the ISA movement highlights this very narrow focus of sports fandom in England.

Equally, as at least two ISA leaders noted, talking about football is far more attractive and central to fandom than political analysis and debate, exhibiting an interesting sense of weariness about the political aspects of the ISA's work, as if these had to be accepted but were not primarily what the ISA

[417] Hargreaves 1992b, page 138

wanted to be about. At INUSA's AGM, Kevin Miles concluded the administrative, constitutional and political matters (resolutions etc) with the words, 'Now let's talk about football, which is what we are all here for after all': in interview, he noted how he 'would like to be a member of a fans' group that did not have to worry about getting ripped off and stitched up, and just celebrated your enjoyment of football. I'd rather be going to more away matches and fewer committee meetings.' The sense that the issues around football are ultimately peripheral to the real business of fandom appeared strong even in Miles, a committed activist with a strong political interest and clear ideological line. The first half of the INUSA AGM was strikingly quiet, and there were few contributions from the floor (despite Miles specifically asking for members' opinions, and noting their vital importance to a representative fan group): however, when the discussion in the second half of the AGM shifted to focus totally on Newcastle United and football generally (including a question and answer session with two United ex-players), the level of interest, interaction and participation rose very significantly. A similar change in mood was visible at both the LCISA meeting, and the BIFA Steering Committee meeting, with interest picking up once the discussion turned to the team.

At the 1997 SISA meeting, McMillan publicly expressed 'exasperation' at the extent to which SISA were forced to address the shares scandal, the new stadium and club finances, and how he would prefer to focus on the team and fixtures. SISA's emergency meeting generally embodied this attitude: members urged swift action from SISA over the share scandal and the attitude of Cowen and Lowe in order that these issues could be settled and supporters could then return to the 'real' business of supporting SFC in a difficult time. Indeed all the 'political' ISAs (BIFA, SISA and INUSA) publicly reassured the team that, whatever their disputes with the board or chairman, these would not (usually) spill over into opposition to the manager or players. This is less a question of 'bad faith' (as King suggests),[418] and more a recognition of the central need of fandom not to damage the team or

[418] King 1997, page 341

manager (except in extreme circumstances, as with SISA's anti-Branfoot campaign, or where a manager becomes inextricably associated with a particular chairman). It would deny core elements of traditional fandom to campaigns in ways that would damage the team.

It is straightforward, even obvious, to suggest that fandom is not 'naturally' concerned with 'issues' and that fans prefer to focus on their team. But this simple fact (contextualised and shaped, of course, as it is by ideological considerations as noted above, and by key media agenda relating to football) is central to any proper understanding of ISAs, what they are ultimately about, and their political or ideological nature. With the exception of LCISA, these ISAs can be seen as standing armies (of varying strengths), ready to mobilise when faced with a crisis but which otherwise saw little need for sustained activism or participation. These patterns of activism are visible from the attendance (about 30-35) at the INUSA AGM (held two days after the two disgraced directors had resigned), from the higher numbers attending LCISA social meetings (where guest speakers were booked) than LCISA administrative meetings, and from the 600-700 attendances at SISA emergency meetings in 1997 and 1998. This confirms that, for most members, activism is a response to a specific issue of immediate and clear relevance, and not to abstract or general principles or long-term concepts of representation. This even penetrated, in some ways, the upper reaches of the ISA: while, in interviews, both McMillan and Miles scorned the notion that football could be apolitical or detached from issues like social justice or community, there was a strong sense that, given the choice, their role in a fan group would be primarily social in nature. Clearly, the constant need to address political issues was taking its toll, particularly given their view that football is, or should be, a release from the pressures of every-day life, and indeed forms part of the rituals and practices vital to wider social interaction and a central part of self-identity, far from the sound and fury of political debates. As Miles bluntly put it, 'I found myself... almost feeling resentful about the club, or begrudging about going to the game, and I thought I'm not letting these people make me feel bad about my football club. I was supporting these [Newcastle] before these [directors] came on the scene.'

Buckingham alluded to a similar, though less explicit, attitude at LCISA, which operated a strategy of making their meetings as social as possible precisely to encourage attendance. LCISA do stand apart in this analysis, as the least 'culturally' rooted ISA of this sample and the one most concerned with obtaining tickets and organising travel or social events connected to the club (noted in *supra*, Chapter Five). The small sample of activists notwithstanding, LCISA are clearly different, as is clear from Table Seven below, summarising the priorities of their active members.

Table Seven: Priorities of LCISA members (n=14)

ISSUE	NUMBER OF MEMBERS WHO MENTIONED IT
Tickets/prices	4
Stadium facilities/safety	3
Travel arrangements	2
Monitoring the club	2
Getting information to fans	1
Representation	1

Members were clearly unmotivated by anti-racism and terraces (despite their known support for the latter, with 1997 AGM attendees voting 11-3 in favour of having standing areas at Bede Island; see *supra*, Chapter Five): even the new stadium (that would fundamentally shape City's fortunes for the years to come) was only highlighted by three of the fourteen members, and it seems instructive that two of those three run the ISA. By comparison with the other ISAs, there was little interest in fan representation or democratisation, and the different cultural logic behind LCISA's formation is obvious. But even leaving LCISA aside, the ISAs, generally, cannot be seen as political groups pursuing abstract principles or clear ideologies, but instead are committed fans who combine aspects of their personal fandom with specific crises or problems at their club to inspire membership and genuine activism.

Given this context, and what members want their ISA to do, and the respective importance of 'issues' and social fandom, INUSA stand apart from other ISAs: its most significant feature is that the crucial factor that normally opens the chairman and Board to fan discontent - poor team performance - was simply absent when INUSA was formed, and remained so up until the

1997-1998 season. Between 1992 and 1997, Newcastle's fortunes were refashioned so rapidly and with such style by Kevin Keegan that the club transformed itself from Second Division strugglers to Premier League title contenders. Yet, despite such (relative) success (which usually saps fans' radicalism and campaigning zeal), the perceived or real effects on certain supporters and fandoms of the processes NUFC used to fund the improvements to the team still generated a fan backlash in the shape of INUSA and its remit to address a range of issues central to transformation. The unrepresentativeness of INUSA (along with IMUSA) and the circumstances around its genesis, makes the group genuinely significant in football's cultural politics: for fans to actively and fundamentally contest the actions of their club when the team is playing glamorous and attractive football, and operating at its most stylish and successful level for over three decades, clearly highlights a deep-rooted dissatisfaction with the relationship between club and fan, and the direction the club is moving in. This is underlined by Miles' assessment of INUSA's early membership, which visibly contained excluded fans reacting against their growing *personal* inability to access live matches. INUSA, in this sense, offers the best example of genuinely deep-rooted forms of resistance and contestation to transformation, expressing dissatisfaction with the game over and above, and irrespective of, contingent performances of the team.

ISA Sub-culture, Football Culture and Resistance

The next focus of analysis is the extent to which ISAs campaign for what can be described as working class football values, and the specific ways they contest and resist football's modern project. In many pressure groups, there is an imbalance between a group's class objectives and its class composition (like the middle and upper-class leadership of the Labour Party during its most radically socialist decades, despite the upper-working class trade union element present at the same time): the values ISAs support and defend are ultimately more important than their social composition to their campaigns and role within the politics of football, since it is their ideas that can impact on the game. The extent and nature of ISA resistance does not lend itself to any easy determination. However, an analysis of the resistance offered by these

groups on certain specific changes that have proved central to transformation enable the movement to be located in relationship to dominant values. This is necessarily a balancing act, and it is ultimately more important to highlight general ISA culture than to seek a 'definitive' answer on these questions. The three most significant changes are arguably shifts in the demography of the match-day crowd, the redevelopment of stadium, and football's new commercial and financial ethos.[419] Combined, these forces are, and have been, central to the repositioning of football.

1. The Demography of the *Match-Day Crowd*

As argued in Chapter One, crucial to the modern football business are new spectators with new forms of fan attachment. While the arrival of such groups are not in themselves a problem for these ISAs (discussed below), all consciously point to the effects of price rises on the demography of the crowd: they also adopt an inclusive approach aimed at securing a diversity of backgrounds within stadia, where 'real' fans (anyone with a genuine emotional and personal link to the game) can access the live experience and have their cultural traditions respected and tolerated (notably participation, standing, and chanting). None of these groups make the 'mistake' that King accuses IMUSA of, that is 'teleologically' collapsing discernible fluctuations in football's history into a continuum of working class control and dominance,[420] and instead highlight the working class roots of their clubs and much of football, and seek to ensure that working class fans retain a degree of purchase on the modern game, *alongside* all the other sectors of the modern crowd. The uneven nature of the history of professional football is entirely recognised and accepted: BIFA's conceptualisation of the game does not include any image or notion of working class control up to the 1990s, but seeks to create, and preserve, genuine plurality within the modern crowd, and protect the right of all to attend if they so choose: BIFA seek to ensure that the low-waged or unemployed are not adversely affected by moves towards the corporate and middle-class crowd, and the growth of

[419] Obviously missing is television, but since it is not directly within the clubs' everyday remit and Sky have a contract with the FA Premier League until 2001, it is excluded here.
[420] King 1997a, page 338

consumption paradigms. Equally, McMillan argues that SISA 'always maintain that football is for everyone, but as it is historically a working class sport... there is the importance always to make sure that football is affordable, especially to those on a lower wage, those that find themselves in and out of work, which is very much the case for working people'. To this extent, these ISAs adopt an inclusive approach that foregrounds working class fans *within* a wider pluralist demography, and does not collapse the history of football into a lineal story of working class dominance. Since these ISAs accept and would defend the right of all to attend, they cannot be accused of rewriting the history of football to suit resistance to an exclusionary, class-based projection of its present.

Such an inclusionary approach logically rejects the current free market mentality of most top level clubs, their profit maximisation agenda and consequent desire to attract fans from whichever market contributes the most to club coffers. This agenda does, to that extent, significantly strike at current values, particularly the ways that clubs absolve themselves of any responsibility for the composition of the match-day crowd, or the respective involvement of the local community and 'outsiders'. This is conducted through the ISA rejection of the market approach towards outcomes, opposition to the recent shift from an ideationally and morally informed approach towards the game (however abstract or unconscious) that recognised and accepted social and cultural outcomes, to an economic approach that, by definition, can only conceive of the relationship between club and fan in terms of customer-based, revenue-driven markets. Current industry values within its higher echelons are essentially based on libertarian economics, in that they accept market outcomes as long as the market itself is seen to be free and fair. This concept is central to the business ethos that has penetrated the game in the 1990s, and can be seen in much of its current condition. In focusing on the actual operation of free market capitalism (through an emphasis on outcomes), the ISAs *a priori* reject market-justifications for club policies, which is particularly significant since the clubs' free market paradigms can only conceptualise the excluded as an

economic issue – their inability to purchase or consume – rather than a social or cultural question (their inability to access live football).

It is fairly straightforward to relate this to class (alongside race and gender) and to attempts by working class fans (especially those on low or irregular incomes) to regain, or retain, an active foothold within professional football. In this sense, ISA attitudes actively seek to protect and promote working class interests within the game, but, crucially, not in some crude workerist exclusionary fashion at the expense of other groups (be they defined by class, race, gender, or disability). To this extent, ISAs do not uncritically operate from traditional agenda, but seek to maintain a *link* between football and what they understand to be its historical working class roots, in the process rejecting the free market approach, the de-localisation and globalisation of top English clubs, and the appeal to wealthier spectators on the basis of glamour and entertainment. This resistance operates by imbuing the club with a social meaning, which clubs are often keen to discard, for fear of restricting their scope for expansion and commercial development and hence their profit maximising project. Furthermore, to include the 'lower orders' in the ways advocated by these ISAs would re-construct the conceptualisation of each club, based on non-economic notions such as moral obligation to the community and/or the class that sustained football up to very recently: such a re-conceptualisation gives a club a complex *raison d'être* far removed from the simple amorality of the profit motive, and invests clubs with precisely those attitudes and responsibilities they are very keen to jettison.

It is worth noting that this description of the free market logic is a general statement that does not necessarily apply to the same extent at every club: two of these four clubs (Leicester City and Sheffield United) still retain something of this socially-informed mentality, in that both offer concessions to certain fans (such as the unemployed), and have yet to collapse the relationship with fans into a simple ability to pay. Opposed to this, however, Newcastle United are one of the most fundamentalist of the market-driven clubs, and have openly made wealth the defining factor in their relationship

with fans, once more justified by the need to 'compete'. The case of Southampton is distinct and different, since their very low capacity means they permanently operate at full capacity regardless of the ticket price. The fact that only one of these clubs have totally accepted, and work from, an amoral economic logic should not distract from the significance of ISA attitudes towards the crowd in general. Despite differences in the current approach of their clubs, all these four ISAs have sought to promote and maintain inclusive attitudes and practices, and defend this inclusive stance against the 'natural' tendency of clubs to move towards market mentalities in the future, with clear consequences, for instance, for prices and pricing systems.

The ISAs conceptualisation of their club is, therefore, fundamentally different from dominant values. That not all these clubs currently operate from the same agenda to the same degree does not eliminate the possibility that those who still retain some sense of social responsibility will shift to the free market, profit maximisation agenda of Newcastle United or Manchester United. This could be particularly the case if the rash of stories concerning take-overs of major English clubs by global capital in 1998 proves correct, and multi-national companies as large (and basically uncontrollable) as News Corporation buy and control clubs. The development of Chelsea in the 1990s is instructive in this respect, where the club's entire agenda was radically changed: not only did the price of some tickets double between 1993 and 1997, but the club rapidly appended a new business wing to their operations, notably building a hotel and village complex next to Stamford Bridge.

As has been often noted, the ISA's liberal or moderate left-wing inclusive approach is not in itself traditional, but more closely fits FSA values, in that traditionality in its original form would decline to focus on, or defend, the rights of minority and female fans within stadia. The ISA attitude broadly speaking covers all fans, the terrace fans who want to create an atmosphere, women supporters, the family supporters, minority fans, older fans, fans content to sit and watch, and those spectators whose fandom is essentially shaped by opportunities to consume around their club or the game. Part of

this, it must be noted, is tactical, as Pinto, for one, admitted: he noted how an ISA that operated with a narrow perspective on notions of legitimate fandom and fans would, in effect, restrict its appeal and constituency by alienating potential members from diverse sections of the crowd. Equally, if the ISA sought to focus on, and support, certain forms of fandom within the ground at the expense of others, they could restrict the appeal of the club, and so paradoxically and counter-productively (in view of their desire to see their club succeed) reduce gate receipts, particularly at a club like Sheffield United where there is excess capacity at most fixtures. Corporate hospitality is outside this conceptualisation, of course, since such spectators have a totally different motivation for attendance, and so sit outside the ISA construction of the range of 'valid' fans and fan traditions. This distinction, in itself, amounts to an important rejection of modern values: in insisting that fandom has to be emotionally informed, the ISAs reconstruct the club as a site of social meaning and interaction, and not as a means to an economic or business end. This line of contestation between ISAs and modern clubs is clearly drawn: ISAs seek to promote precisely those social meanings which clubs, as part of their transformation, discard, or, as needed from time to time, employ cynically and without application to the real world.[421] Whether this inclusive approach towards the crowd can ever be the sole organising principle of football within the reality of its contemporary conditions is a moot point; ISAs seek to broaden the class base of support for football, part of which involves recreating what one class fraction regards as its natural status within the game. Far from being proponents of an exclusionary, narrow-based audience of white, working class heterosexual men, the ISA approach would integrate the financially excluded and culturally marginalised together with the female, middle class and minority fans, to create the plurality currently perceived to be absent from the modern crowd. It is also clear that, in expecting clubs to pro-actively address the issue of demography and therefore their relationship with their locality, the ISA movement appeals to traditional conceptions of what a club should exist for.

[421] Like John Hall, who proselytised the 'Geordie Nation' in the transformation of NUFC, which in reality meant very little and was quietly dropped: Williams 1996b, Conn 1997.

However, while conceptually, the corporate element is excluded from ISA definitions of the 'acceptable' crowd, at no time did this translate into real, open, class-based, opposition to their presence within the stadium: hostility to corporate hospitality arises essentially when the preferred and sustained relationship between types of supporter becomes so skewed so as to visibly penalise and marginalise 'ordinary' fans. It is the differential in the respect accorded to each, the imbalance in the relative significance attached to each, and the differential in the type and range of facilities available to each, that generates opposition to the arrival and presence of corporate spectators. If the relationship between the 'ordinary' and corporate elements was *equitable* and seen to be such, none of these ISAs would have any particular concern with the presence of the latter; indeed, generally they are scornfully happy to have them, seeing them as a source of easy and sometimes much needed revenue for their clubs, but only provided that they do not become the main focus of the club and the dominant section of the crowd.[422] The absence of an exclusionary *class-based* conception of the crowd is an important finding of this research, and has important implications for the modern club in its approach towards the match-day demography and access to live football. It is significant that general contempt towards corporate hospitality was only once actually highlighted as a proper priority campaign issue: this was identified by a member of INUSA, which is significant in that it is at Newcastle United, of all the clubs analysed here, that the relationship between different spectator groups in the 1990s has been most heavily and visibly skewed in favour of corporate hospitality.[423]

2. The Stadium

Probably the clearest resistance to modern developments was over the issue of stadia, over the new grounds for Southampton and Leicester, the proposed relocation and then redesign of Newcastle's ground, and the expansion of Sheffield United's facilities: the stadia these ISAs wanted to see

[422] Maybe this can be seen as re-distributive justice, whereby ISA members accept corporate spectators on the grounds that the 'excessive' prices the latter pay help ensure that prices for ordinary fans remain lower. There is thus an instrumental dynamic at work that would lead to ISA tolerance of the corporate element, within certain clearly identifiable boundaries.
[423] In England, NUFC stand out in this regard along with Manchester United and Chelsea.

built contested modern trends in some important ways, that would create a match-day experience and culture that would affect current commercial opportunities, and in the process reconstruct the meaning of the club.

The highly inclusive ISA approach towards the crowd demography feeds directly into their approach towards the nature and design of the stadium, and therefore does not fit older conceptions of traditionality, but is reminiscent of FSA culture, and elements of early 1990s traditional modes of expression mediated by fanzine culture. There is even less sense in which the ISA approach to the stadium fits that of the clubs, since the latter show increasingly less concern for the community the stadium resides in, and their own role in it.[424] Given the exclusionary nature of FAPL processes that impact on demography and the stadium, and the privileging of football's commercial 'success' (which, in the view of the clubs, depends on creating a new crowd by building new facilities and generating a new image around football), ISA attitudes towards the stadium have an idealistic edge, in seeking to 'unify' the diverse elements of the crowd inside the one ground. It is obvious that this would have clear and important implications for the nature of the stadium, and the practices permitted within it. The stadia the ISAs wanted their clubs to build were consciously intended to allow for the expression of a variety of traditions and forms of fandom, with support for singing and chanting areas on the one hand, and family enclosures on the other, and for the necessary structural alterations to stadia.

This is another significant rejection of modern agenda, with the ISAs defending elements of both working class traditionality and FSA attitudes towards the nature of 'valid' interaction with football: clearly the ISA movement support what can be called working class forms of interaction within the ground, and the ways that working class fans often express themselves, particularly the younger male element. There is a strong element of *jouissance* about the stadia the ISAs would design, offering the clubs less

[424] There have been complaints about the impact Liverpool and Everton have on their localities, with Liverpool accused of allowing local houses they own to fall into disrepair, and Everton of 'blighting' the area around Goodison Park (*Liverpool Echo*, 30 December 1998).

control and creating more cultural diversity than can currently be found at top level grounds, rejecting the modern game's stifling and restrictive approach towards fans and fan expression in favour of the ecstatic liberation of emotions implicitly and explicitly deemed central to fandom. All these ISAs reject the *plaisir* that Armstrong and Giulianotti identify as one of the guiding concepts of modern football, the prim and proper control and sanitisation of the stadium, and instead, drawing upon traditional notions of expression, participation and communality, would re-introduce within stadia social and physical spaces for the creation of much less regulated fandom and controlled behaviour. Of course, these discourses are, in this case, merged with anti-racist (and occasional anti-sexist) agenda, to reformulate original forms of terrace expression to fit the political agenda behind much of the ISA work. ISA members personally accepted as legitimate, and supported this notion of fandom (74 out of the 92 activists across the four ISAs supported a return to the terraced, standing or singing areas that were the breeding ground for young male working class culture at football from the 1960s onwards), even though some said they would themselves still prefer to sit down. The ISAs were keen to restore a choice that had been (in their view, arbitrarily) removed, which has important integrative implications. In some senses, this was one of the few issues where support for an abstract principle was clearly visible, although that is partly due to the fact that all discussions of terraces and standing areas and the expression of values that they facilitate are currently, by necessity, abstracted and outside the boundaries of practical politics. As an active issue that ISAs should focus on, terraces did not register highly.

More generally, the ISAs sought to turn their stadia into genuine community assets, actively including the local populace and improving access to the ground. The relationship with local communities that the ISAs sought was not in pursuit of commercial market-based considerations, but originates from a different conception of the club which, though not traditional in nature, cannot be easily accommodated by modern commercial values. The stadium (and club) were expected to act as community facilities in a variety of ways: LCISA wanted space within the Bede Island commercial concourse deliberately

offered by LCFC to local Asian food outlets (alongside the other anti-racist work LCISA supported in the community), which, while obviously a commercial venture, through the development of clear racially-aware spaces within the stadium, brings LCFC into the heart of debates about the nature of a club, its responsibilities to its locality and all those who make up its fanbase. While the inclusion of an Asian food facility within a ground might seem a relatively small matter, symbolically it is very significant, in that it makes a formal claim on cultural space previously reserved for white working class discourses and images; the *conscious* nature of LCISA's suggestion (which would, of course, make some of the local Asian community genuine 'stakeholders' in LCFC) is highly significant, and clearly rejects traditional working class discourses, through the penetration of the ultimate symbol of the white working class by minority groups. Southampton's active co-operation with the local Asian community living around the St Mary's site equally lies outside traditional working class discourses, and reveals an engaged, political agenda beyond even standard FSA discourses. All the ISAs generally supported the notion of allowing the community (schools for instance) access to the stadium on a non-commercial basis.

The distance between attempts to genuinely connect the local community with a club, and dominant football values is, however, even more considerable, and particularly important given the de-localisation of top clubs, where the localities and communities in which they are located cease to be anything more than symbolic.[425] The ISA focus on varying sorts of 'local' within the stadium, like space for minority communities, would restrict the ability of clubs to pitch their appeal away from the immediate surroundings and across the globe. Conceptualising the club as existing for the locals, including the local working class (as John Regan explicitly put it with reference to Newcastle United) detaches it from the modern project of creating and prioritising fans from all across the country and the globe on the basis of relative spending power at the expense of the local element.

[425] Williams 1993

Such resistance was visible in other ways: INUSA rejected outright the notion of the diversified leisure ground, and openly campaigned for a stadium without a commercial or leisure complex attached to it, while SISA accepted the commercial aspects of the Stoneham project solely because the funding for the proposal depended on it. The subsequent St Mary's plan (submitted to Southampton City Council in 1999) suffered from no such funding problems, and it is significant that SISA rejected the inclusion of commercial aspects in that later development. LCISA, meanwhile, sought to combine genuine community features at Bede Island with locally-based commercial developments, and were concerned that the economy around Filbert Street, significantly sustained by proximity to City, was not damaged by the move to Bede Island. In each case, the profit maximisation logic at the heart of modern stadium design was rejected, or was conditioned by other considerations that would have prevented the stadium from becoming a fully diversified commercial facility. The sense of the ground as a football stadium for football fans, and for the local community on a non-commercial basis, that is a place with affective, social and cultural baggage, was strong throughout the ISAs, an approach that flies directly counter to modern diversification discourses. Economic 'reality' of course did pervade ISA thinking: LCISA were perfectly comfortable with the proposed construction of commercial concourses within the Bede Island complex, due simply, in many senses, to Leicester City's traditional problem of being a small club with small facilities compared to their immediate rivals. BIFA also accepted the new leisure centre built next to Bramall Lane, and the commercial ethos visible in many of the features of the new John Street Stand, their approach again shaped by the club's general shortage of funds following relegation in 1994 and the need to generate extra revenue to compensate for falling gates.[426] But, even here, Pinto reported worries on the Steering Committee about the *motivation* behind these developments, a sense within BIFA that, first and last, SUFC is a football club and all its facilities and activities, particularly the stadium, should be geared towards that. The diversification of the late 1980s and early

[426] As noted in Chapter Three, attendances at Sheffield United were badly affected by relegation in 1993-94, dipping considerably below the club's break-even figure of 15,000.

1990s (with Old Trafford hosting rugby league games, and Villa Park hosting pop concerts) would have no place in the stadia proposed by these ISAs.

Furthermore, none of the groups opposed relocation in principle, with obvious implications for the nature of resistance: the fact that relocation was accepted would seem to suggest a certain compliance with the dominant competitive logic of the age, but this is in fact less important than may be thought, simply because the facilities then available at Leicester City, Southampton and, to a lesser extent, Newcastle were simply too limited to accommodate all the fans who wanted to buy tickets. The additional lack of any economically viable scope for redevelopment (particularly at The Dell or Filbert Street) simply cemented support for relocation. While this acceptance does concur with the FAPL mentality of subordinating culture and practice to market 'needs', these ISAs' accommodating stance was shaped by a combination of two, more significant, factors: first, that existing capacities were excluding so many genuine fans, and second, they could not be affordably redeveloped and offer the prospect of a long-term future in the top division. The picture is thus unclear, and support for relocation cannot be seen as a form of simple compliance with FAPL market values. In any event, the design features of the new stadium, and the cultural practices permitted within in it, are ultimately of greater significance than the simple fact of its construction.

3. Commercial Operations and Motivations

Opposition to the personal profit motive was clearly common to these ISAs, and sparked some of their most passionate campaigning: SISA, LCISA and INUSA all took a strong view that making personal profit from a football club is wrong, and unacceptable as the prime motivation for a director's involvement with it. The prime cases, besides Hall and Shepherd at Newcastle (*supra*, Chapter Six), were SISA's focus on the share issue and the presence of Rupert Lowe at SFC in the first place (*supra*, Chapter Four) and LCISA's arguments with Leicester City over the 1997 Madrid trip (*supra*, Chapter Five), an issue they took up a year later with the director who was accused of personally profiting from the travel arrangements for it. LCISA also wanted to uncover who profited from the operations of Fox Leisure

(manufacturers of LCFC kits, reportedly in-house), and identify who Goldwyn Securities were (the finance and construction partners with LCFC for Bede Island). While there are, partly, consumer rights discourses in these campaigns, such attitudes also clearly connect with the attacks made by traditionality and FSA culture on 'fat cat directors' and the view that any money made by a club should stay within it, and should be used for the facilities offered to fans, and the team, rather than directors, who should not shape their club's operations on the basis of their personal business interests. This is obviously hard to reconcile with the modern capitalist project, which has legitimated the personal and institutional profit motive, and where there is no shame attached to earning millions of pounds from relatively small investments in clubs,[427] investing in clubs for business motives,[428] or even in directors of one club owning shares in another.[429] Rejecting the personal profit motive eliminates a central pillar of the capitalist transformation of football, and in a traditional sense, constructs the club as a *club* and not a company. This is not to suggest a Luddite rejection of the need for proper business acumen and substantial funding: such elements of the modern game were unambiguously accepted, but were related not to the profit motive, but to the desire to see the team succeed *without* simultaneously transforming the club into a capitalist institution. Divorced from the profit motive, financial acumen and funding were best supplied by wealthy, local fans who understood business but also, crucially, the social meaning of the club. Fans who became directors could be trusted to preserve the club by prioritising its interests over their own. In this way, the question of how to finance the club is conceptually divorced from the motivations behind much of the contingent financing of modern clubs, particularly given ISA attempts to ensure fan access to decision-making processes. Combined, this represents a fundamentally different ethos and attitude towards the nature of the club and sport from that currently gaining a hegemony over it.

[427] Martin Edwards stood to personally earn over £80m and a seat on the board of BSkyB by selling Manchester United to BSkyB in 1998.
[428] Like Chris Akers of Caspian who took over Leeds United in 1997
[429] Edwards owns £100,000 worth of shares in Leicester City: reported in *Express*, 20 December 1997

However, in other ways, there was a more accommodating attitude amongst the ISAs towards modern commercial values: within the standard FSA boundaries of taste, and consumer discourses (concerned with the regularity with which kits are changed), merchandise and team kits were not, in principle, a problem for any of these ISAs; while each sought to inject a sense of the traditional, and a denial of the profit motive, into their clubs' merchandising operations, how far this would in fact restrict a club's ability to successfully produce merchandise is open to doubt. While the restrictions imposed by a focus on traditional colours are clear, the principle of generating revenue through regularly changing kits is still conceded, and a clever merchandising strategy could avoid such restrictions, particularly via away kits and leisure ranges. But, in essence, by investing the home strip with a culturally-rooted social meaning ('tradition', locality, purity (like Barcelona), or connections to past glories), these ISAs redefine it in ways that fundamentally reject the commercially driven discourses of modern merchandising, and offer an alternative meaning of the kit and its design, and limit the *extent* of exploitation that becomes possible.

Many ISA members, including senior committee members, did personally buy club merchandise (notably the team shirt), and so contributed to its diversified operations[430] at the same time as their ISAs sought to retain the historical and cultural roots of specific kits: to this extent, it may be argued that successfully resisting the kit design (in the sense of influencing the club to 'improve' its appeal by making it responsive to traditional concerns), ISAs 'legitimate' these commercial operations, and so deepen the processes that create the exclusion and marginalisation they simultaneously reject.

Such an argument rests on two questionable assumptions. First, that the club's profit motive must necessarily be all-encompassing and cover all its operations - there is, in fact, no inherent conceptual contradiction in a club simultaneously seeking to maximise *non-ticket* revenue and constructing ticket pricing systems that ensure access to the ground for all, thus breaking

[430] As Russell notes, 1997, page 234

the link between the commercialisation of the club and access to live games. On the face of it, Italian clubs have sought to achieve this: prices at top Italian stadia like the San Siro and the Delle Alpi are structured to allow the vast majority of those who want to attend to do so, with tickets behind the goal priced from £7 (half the FAPL average), to over £200 next to the directors' box: simultaneously, these clubs are developing their commercial operations (changing their kits more often, etc) and seek to maximise non-ticket revenue.[431] Clearly, these diverse approaches towards pricing systems must be located within the different class structures of Western societies, and the relative centrality in Britain of class as a force that fundamentally shaped individual life and social relations.[432] The exclusionary approach towards class within English football is clear and undeniable, and while top European clubs are adopting similar agenda, this disjunction highlights how the commercial agenda dominating English football are not necessarily homogenous in motive or effect, but are capable of differential construction and determination. Indeed, the logic of this as applied, for instance, to merchandising, is the position the ISAs take: while the pure profit motive of clubs towards merchandising operations should be eliminated, the decision fans make to consume merchandise is ultimately one they have to bear themselves (a market choice, aside from the notion that clubs are exploiting fan loyalty), but ticket pricing systems should always be equitably constructed, since traditional and FSA fandom cannot conceive of attendance as an optional element. To this extent, the ISAs adopt more commonly European models where class or income should not affect attendance patterns, but can, in part, mediate what are deemed additional elements to fandom (merchandise). It is not uncommon, for instance, for disaffected less well-off fans at English clubs to refuse to spend anything within the ground, determined that the only money they put into the club be the cost of the match ticket. In this way, the ISAs seek to detach the current effects of merchandising (subordination and exclusion) from their actual operations.

[431] Carling Survey 1997, page 116
[432] Argued by Gerteis and Savage 1998, and what Savage calls the 'peculiarly British obsession with class'; Savage 1995, page 17

Secondly, the argument that ISAs are deepening commercialisation assumes that commercialisation and the subordination it creates *can* be stopped or reversed by forces outside the clubs who drive them and the markets that sustain and justify them. In a market where top clubs can easily replace those fans who do not consume with those who do (or will), and where the entire globe can be turned into a profitable market for merchandise, working class fans opposed to commercialisation have no leverage; with the current power relationship between them and football stacked so heavily in favour of the latter and its processes of commercialisation, it is impossible to conceive of anything that can reverse such processes, so long as football remains popular with those elements of the crowd whose connections with it are centred on consumption. While that section of the population remains interested and wealthy enough to attend and consume football, and while television can generate the current multi-million pound revenues from it, then such processes will continue unchecked, and will remain un-checkable.

For fans of the top clubs, refusing to buy club products is, on its own, clearly an inadequate response to commercialisation; since so many other fans buy them (Manchester United sold 850,000 kits in 1996 in the UK alone), such forms of protest will have no impact whatever. Indeed, an individual refusal to buy merchandise is not just irrelevant to effective processes of resistance, but serves further to marginalise resistant fans in the scramble for scarce tickets, as clubs unofficially prioritise those supporters known to consume more (overseas fans, family fans etc). Yet, if working class fans do consume around their clubs, they are equally reinforcing commercialisation and so their own marginalisation and subordination. The argument that working class fans are colluding in their own, or other supporters', subordination can only carry conceptual or explanatory validity where fans have a genuine *choice* of outcome, and where the forces of commercialisation can be reversed or limited: yet quite clearly, there is no choice, since whatever action fans take ultimately results in their marginalisation. It can be plausibly argued that this battle is lost, that the forces of change and commercialisation confronting traditionality and the excluded are simply too strong, and to this extent, there are no strategies for working class opponents of

commercialisation to employ that may offer some hope of re-gaining 'their' place in the game; they can only try to shore up their current position within it. The facts of personal consumption of merchandise and opposition to certain forms of merchandise are in essence irrelevant to their status within football.

Withdrawing altogether from active attendance would, of course, be the ultimate symbolic and material rejection of modern football, and yet also the ultimate defeat, since it simply frees up another seat in the ground, to be filled by others who might well contribute to consumption, and so further support processes of commercialisation. The 1990s transformation does not *involve* working class fans, more often than not it simply *affects* them. The top clubs, particularly, can pursue their commercial objectives irrespective of the responses of discontented working class fans, so the disaffected and/or excluded cannot do other than watch: as purposeful social actors, they have been disempowered. The only genuine option might be to bring violence (or the threat of violence) back to the match-day experience and so scare off the new elements of the crowd. But even here, this 'nuclear' option (that these ISAs explicitly refuse to contemplate) would simply further inspire the clubs to exclude them, further entrenching rather than alleviating their minority status. The most that such fans can hope to do is to limit the scope of commercial operations (by defending traditional club colours, for instance), adopt the 'Watchdog' consumer rights mentality alluded to previously, and seek to maintain their own space within the ground.

The central ISA approach to commercialisation is the pressure they apply to detach the profit maximisation motive from commercial operations. All the ISAs reject the principle of profit maximisation, working instead from a cost basis and focusing on the need to generate revenue to strengthen the team and provide facilities within the ground for all. SISA, for instance, unreservedly accepted merchandising as a necessary part of the modern game, but were keen to reduce the costs involved, and crucially to replace the profit principle with a sense of local and regional identity for fans to draw from the kit. Miles similarly argued that "I would hesitate for our supporters' association to come out and say 'we are dead against a NUFC TV station',

because there will be a lot of supporters who maybe cannot get into many games, where it could be their only contact with the club... why should we, as the privileged season-ticket holders, call against that? The issue for me is how much does it cost, and what is it there for? If it was there to provide a service for fans, it covered its costs and just a bit... to provide a genuine service for fans to spread the word of Newcastle United, then I would not have a particular problem with it. But that's not what it's about, it's about how to squeeze more money out of supporters, it's a profit-making thing." Similar sentiments were expressed by SISA (regarding travel to away and reserve matches, and merchandise) and LCISA (merchandise): this is an important, if not necessarily effective, condition that ISA culture seeks to impose on clubs (with the clear exception of IMUSA, who positively revel in the millions of pounds pouring into Manchester United's coffers).[433] INUSA's conception of commercial development as a way for the excluded to regain some link to football significantly alters the nature of such developments, by eliminating the profit motive in favour of inclusive 'community of fans' discourses, and so shifting the relationship between fan and club merchandising operations.

And finally

Maybe, resistance to modern values was clearest in the abstracted ISA sense of what a club exists for, and what purpose it should serve. The ISA agenda re-creates and protects the community aspects of a club, concentrates on the football aspects of a club rather than the club as a business vehicle, and proposes stadia to cater for all forms of interaction, fandom and types of fan: as a result, this appeals to a different conception of the club, why people should (or do) become involved with it (particularly in financial terms), and what values it should represent (locality/local pride/identity, passion, participation, an antidote to everyday life and work responsibilities). This is particularly true over diversification, where the ISA view of the club is narrower and more football-focused than that of the club; this is also visible in the attempts by all these ISAs to penetrate club decision-making processes and establish fans' right to representation, a

[433] King 1997a

conception most clubs will be unable to accept in any substantive fashion (with genuine exceptions like Leicester City). Such a picture sits uncomfortably with the modern conception of the club, and its *raison d'être.*

Even where there is common ground between the ISAs and clubs, there is often disagreement over some organising principle (profit maximisation versus covering costs, or providing a service), and the general consequence is to locate the ISAs in opposition to modern values. Crucially, in view of the general stereotypification of opposition to the contours of modern football, [434] these ISAs do not seek a return to the demonised past of violence etc, but operate with very inclusive and socially aware discourses and agenda that make them highly progressive, politically-astute representative bodies. As suggested in Chapter One, there is no merit in trying to establish how successful this ISA 'project' of contestation is (though, of course, forcing clubs to consider ISAs in their decision-making is itself, in any terms, a success); what is significant is how the movement operates, and what it seeks to do (particularly in class terms). In these senses, there is much within ISA culture that would 'turn the clock back', much that seeks and sees alternative motivations for much in the modern game, much that defends the interests and rights of those who have been marginalised and excluded through transformation, and much that does not accept full-blown commercial processes. As the fan groups often best able to influence events at their clubs (certainly at Southampton, Sheffield United and Leicester City), the ISAs represent important and significant forms of resistance to the contours and ethos of 1990s football.

Relating these ISAs back to football's changing political economy detailed in Chapter One highlights some important considerations: football has essentially become a consciously, deliberately capitalist operation, a situation that none of these ISAs seek to fundamentally challenge, partly because such a move would lead them headlong into highly politicised debates about the nature of football and wider society that would have distracted attention

[434] See *supra*, Chapter One, including Harverson 1998, Taylor 1995 and Moorhouse 1998, and numerous newspaper articles. Discussed further in Nash 1999

from more immediate issues equally, such an engagement with the capitalist ethos of the game would clearly not have commanded widespread support from the members, particularly in view of their general reluctance to address abstract issues at all, as discussed above. To that extent, while the specifics of what these ISAs support and campaign for, and the values they represent, are often clearly outside the overtly capitalist norms of modern football (for instance, on the demographics of the game, relations with the community and the personal profit motive), the continuance of football as a capital-motivated and profit-driven industry is not questioned: to that extent, therefore, these ISAs are seeking contingent victories on specific issues, chipping away at the less acceptable edges of the edifice rather than seeking to bring it down altogether. Football's current meta-narrative of capitalism is not genuinely challenged by these ISAs, even if specific capitalist processes and decisions are. Restricted by time and energy, and by members' discourses of the experiential and the immediately relevant, these ISAs have not sought, and may not be able, to construct an alternative political economy of football that would reverse the modern penetration of the game by capital and profit, and instead seek to work from within the system in a reformist fashion to achieve specific change of a direct and immediate nature.

This new political economy highlights particularly the increasingly deep and entrenched divisions *within* the FAPL (the widespread notion of the three strata within the top division: the potential league winners, the perennial strugglers and the middle-of-the-road clubs),[435] where money, fanbase, commercial potential and the ability to win trophies are increasingly restricted to a small handful of 'super-clubs'. Such a situation has obvious impacts on ISAs: SISA, BIFA and LCISA members were fully aware that their clubs could never hope to compete in the league with the likes Newcastle, Chelsea, Arsenal, Liverpool or Manchester United, and consequently their ambitions lay in more limited goals of maintaining (or regaining) their place in the elite,

[435] A view publicly espoused by managers of middle-ranking clubs, such as George Graham of Tottenham who suggested that the redesign of the European Champions League for the 1999-2000 season was creating massive imbalances in the FA Premier League. Reported Nando server, 10 May 1999, *http://www.sportserver.com/generic/story/0,1673,47302-76298-545994-0,00.html*

and achieving success in cup competitions. A small number of ISA activists indeed *preferred* not to seek to compete with these other clubs, given that the price had to be paid to do so necessarily appeared to involve the complete re-orientation and redefinition of the club's agenda and *raison d'être* to accommodate and fore-ground the interests of capital, the prioritisation of rampant commercialisation and what they saw as the destruction of the club's social meaning. The diverse positions of these clubs clearly does impact on fans within ISAs, bringing a greater dose of what the industry likes to call 'reality' to the discussion, where the financial status of the club and its consequences for success and development fundamentally mediate the positions the ISAs take. Out of the more limited positions within English football that Sheffield United, Leicester City and Southampton currently occupy (and can hope to occupy for the foreseeable future), arises however opportunities for ISAs and fans in general: it is noticeable that the less secure or non-existent forms of representation to clubs, and the most hostile club attitudes, are often exhibited by the much larger clubs: the example of Manchester United has been noted, while Newcastle United clearly were uninterested in the opinions, or indeed the existence, of INUSA; Liverpool FC have not shown themselves open to *genuine*, two-way communication with supporters, nor have Chelsea or Arsenal. The smaller clubs with limited ('realistic') ambitions like Leicester City necessarily have to adopt a different approach towards supporters, and in this sense, the new political economy of the game can potentially offer supporters of smaller, less well supported clubs greater opportunities for expression, consultation and ultimately genuine representation. Such an approach was clearly in evidence at both Sheffield United and Leicester City, where both clubs, painfully cognisant of their limitations and pressing needs, operate with inclusive (if not truly democratic or representative) discourses that offer organised supporters the opportunity to express themselves and contribute to club policy. A similar situation also clearly existed at Wimbledon. That fans in these ISAs often use that opportunity to contest club decisions and attitudes (as found in this analysis) should be conceptually separated from the fact that the deepening (and increasingly unbridgeable) divisions within football, and the ideology of the genuinely elite clubs, can generate greater pressures on smaller or

poorer clubs (including some in the FAPL) to seek genuine and open relationships with supporters, in turn offering ISAs a greater possibility of ultimately penetrating the power structures of football, and shaping it in the image and interests of what they would call its true supporters.

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Appendix One

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire reproduced below is a sample of the survey form collected from members of the four ISAs (in this case, this was the form distributed to INUSA members). The questionnaires for BIFA and LCISA members did not have the detailed stadium options outlined in Questions 16 and 17.

NAME (for admin purposes only):

1. Why did you join INUSA?

2. How did you hear about INUSA? (fanzine, public announcement, media?)

3. Have you ever been a member of the FSA, the Official SC or the National Federation of Supporters Clubs? *Yes* *No*

If *Yes*, Why did you feel that INUSA offered more than the organisation you used to be a part of?
If *No*, what particularly inspired you about INUSA?

4. What do you think INUSA can achieve? (Long-term representation for fans, or deal with the immediate issues and wind itself up, etc)

5. What do you think its relationship to Newcastle United FC should be?

6. What issues should it cover as part of its everyday work?

7. Does it deal with those issues now?

8. What do you do inside INUSA? (attend, admin, campaign, media work, fund-raise)

9. How far do you think INUSA represents traditional working class fans and traditional concepts of fan behaviour?

10. Should it aim to represent traditional football values?

11. Are you an ex-terrace fan?

12. Have the price rises over recent years at Newcastle United affected how often you can see home games?

13. Do you think the Premier League is an attempt to make football a middle class sport?

14. Do you like the culture of the modern game? ('families', commercialism, Sky, merchandise, special deals for richer fans, 'entertainment')

15. Where do you think the strength of the ISA movement in the 1990s comes from?

16. If you were put in charge of designing a new stadium for Newcastle, which of the following would you include in it? (regardless of the law etc): (tick each one you would like to see included)

- *On-site leisure facilities (cinema, shopping areas etc)*
- *Sports facilities for local schools and community groups to use*
- *Bars and restaurants priced for 'ordinary' spectators*
- *Bars and restaurants priced for corporate spectators*
- *Family stands/enclosures*
- *Terraces (of whatever design)*
- *Dedicated public transport links to and from the stadium*
- *Dedicated car parking for supporters*
- *Corporate boxes/suites*
- *Match-day suites inside the ground for 'ordinary' supporters (like INUSA)*
- *Other options (please specify)* _____

17. If Newcastle had gone ahead with the Castle Leazes plans, how should it have been financed and owned? (tick preferred choice)

- *Financed and owned by local council, and leased long-term to Newcastle United, with club contributing to construction costs*
- *Completely financed and owned by Newcastle United FC*
- *Owned by club, but with council contributing to costs in return for access for local community groups and schools*
- *Built, financed and owned by private company, and leased to Newcastle United FC*
- *Another option (please specify)* _____

18. Were you in favour of the proposed move to Castle Leazes? *Yes* *No*
Please explain why :_____

19. What do you think (in principle) of Newcastle floating on the stock market?

20. What do you think is the ideal way for Newcastle to be run and financed?

21. Is team success by any means OK by you? (i.e. using nursery clubs, stock market flotation, multi-million pound transfers and wages)

22. Talk of Pay Per View and European SuperLeagues is common now - how do you view these things? (positively or negatively)

23. Would you describe yourself as a traditional fan?

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following were the generic questions asked in the interview with the ISA contact or leader: as noted in Chapter Two, additional questions were added to these as they became relevant from the answers given by the interviewee, or to clarify points unclear from those answers, or to take account of new or current developments.

1. what was the situation of club when the ISA was formed? (situation = financial, League position, ground)

2. why did ISA start?

3. how was it started? by whom? who was approached? fanzines, local media, meeting called, social club? if meeting, what sort of people turned up?

4. how was it publicised once decided to start?

5. what was initial response of: club, locals/fans, media, fanzines?

6. how was it organised: commercial, administrative/postal, facilities, cost, membership rules?

7. what were initial aims: opposed what and supported what? how does it relate to commercial ethos and family ideology?

8. which fans does ISA currently represent? how many members don't go to games?

9. ever sought meetings with club or simply decided to storm the barricades, or force attention through the actual work they do and results achieved?

10. how has the ISA developed over the years? What has changed?

11. ISA position on: Broadcasting? League structure? wages/transfers? Ethos of directors? demography of game?

12. relationships with fanzines and plotting of membership trends against successes/defeats and changes in Club policy, i.e. problem solving v representation and campaigning

13. What role do the ISA see for themselves? How much information were the ISA given, and how much did they have to fight for? Methods used to get channels of communication with club?

14. how does the ISA see future of the game?

15. attitude to technology? Does ISA use PCs, mobile phones, faxes etc? (How paid for?)

16. what would constitute success? when would they see their role as spent?

17. ever considering branching out into commercial activities, books, dedicated fanzines? any overtly commercial activities already?

18. how preserve progression of people running ISA? any splits or factions, notably along political lines?