

The Sociology of English Football in the 1990s: Fandom, Business and Future Research¹

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Abstract

Responding to recent attempts to redirect academic analysis of English football within the context of its business-driven transformation in the 1990s, this article argues that two areas in particular have not retained sufficient importance on academic agenda, namely social exclusion, and its effects on fandom, and supporter responses to football's transformation. Future research areas that arise from the game's current business and encompass the economic and the cultural are suggested.

Throughout the 1990s there has been a rapid and enormous transformation in English football, with the top two divisions in particular increasingly penetrated by business processes and entrepreneurs, dominated by global capital and structured to suit the interests of business owners and TV stations. Within this context of a sport in major flux, this article responds to changes in the agenda of football sociology proposed by H.F. Moorhouse (1998). Moorhouse (1998) seeks to re-direct sociological interest in professional football and redefine the academic agenda, proposals that highlight some gaps in the current sociological study of football. These problems are not found solely in the account offered by Moorhouse (1998), but are shared by journalists and many within the game itself: his agenda thus exemplifies many of the restricted discourses that de-legitimise discussion of certain questions and so create these gaps. The objective here is to identify these gaps, respond to Moorhouse's (1998) agenda and suggest some implications for future research.

While English football has been professionalised for more than a century, during the 1990s, football has become, for the first time, an industry similar to other capitalist markets, particularly at the top end (Szymanski & Kuypers 1999; Morrow, 1999). Discourses of football now routinely talk of customers and entertainment, the game attracts investment from global capital, and officials have introduced professional financial, marketing, legal, administrative and sponsorship expertise, legitimated personal profit on a huge scale (Conn, 1997) and become a driving force behind the biggest satellite TV station in Europe, Rupert Murdoch's Sky. This transformation has been analysed in depth elsewhere (Giulianotti, 1999; King, 1997a; Lee, 1998) and has potentially profound implications for academic research. This equally applies to English rugby union and league (Falcous, 1998) and cricket, which have also

adopted football's new agenda. All four sports are moving from the forces that formed them into new social spaces with new social meanings, utilising technology, primarily satellite TV, to drive their development.

The two most far-reaching changes in English football since the 1992 formation of the Premier League, the shift in the target crowd, and rising ticket prices, have resulted in growing social exclusion on the basis of income. Social exclusion is conceived here as the increasingly inability of those on low or irregular incomes and the unemployed to regularly access live football at top clubs, due to both ticket prices and ticketing systems. Apart from the obvious consequences for the composition of the match-day crowd, the potential impact is to fracture the social networks that historically informed fandom: these networks were formed around active attendance, such that their demise changes forever these fans' relationship with the game. David Conn (1997) details the exclusion of local life-long fans of Newcastle United and Blackburn Rovers, unable to meet the rapidly escalating prices charged by clubs deliberately targeting de-localised markets for tickets and merchandise,² and switching from walk-up ticket sales to advance sales via credit cards and season tickets. There are also complaints that young, local supporters of Liverpool, Manchester United and Newcastle United, for instance, are struggling to form active attendance patterns. Researchers need only stand outside these grounds after kick-off to see the numbers of (apparently local) fans who have failed to obtain tickets. These supporters usually end up in pubs close to these grounds, following the action taking place across the road via TV newsflashes. This has a number of potentially important consequences that are discussed below.

While, as Tony Mason (1980: 150) notes, clubs have long priced tickets so as to exclude certain classes of fans, the 1990s were characterised by deliberate moves by top clubs to exploit their position as global brands, to maximise profit (particularly at floated clubs, like Manchester United), and to attract corporate hospitality and the professional classes. Some of these features date back to the 1960s such as corporate boxes at United, (Crick & Smith 1989: 169). During the 1990s, however, there were much more widespread efforts to universalise these features, presenting a qualitatively new scenario. Top English clubs now openly operate with a market approach, in which they seek out the most lucrative fan bases for merchandise and tickets. The British Government's Football Taskforce found that average adult tickets had risen 331 per cent between 1989 and 1999 (Football Taskforce 1999: 29). The exclusionary consequences of this (particularly on local fans) are conceptualised within the industry as simply the logic of the market and, indeed, necessary to generate the revenue to sign the best players and pay their escalating wages. Few clubs appear willing to address the issue: Manchester United chairman Martin Edwards publicly told those unable to afford rising prices at Old Trafford to attend reserve games instead, while Kevin Keegan, then manager of Newcastle

United, commented that 'if you want a beer you've got to pay for it and if you want a packet of cigarettes you've got to pay for it and if you want to watch football you've got to pay for it' (Naughton, 1996). Liverpool and Everton routinely counter complaints about rising prices by pointing to the new facilities the extra revenue has helped build, or by making essentially meaningless comparisons with the prices charged by other Premier League clubs.³ The Football Taskforce (1999) found that in 1998-99, only Aston Villa among the twenty Premier League clubs offered unemployed fans a concessionary price.

Systematic analysis of the forces that create exclusion,⁴ and more importantly its consequences on fandom, has been scant. If Moorhouse's (1998) agenda for future research were accepted, however, the amount of research would decline further. He objects in particular to the devotion of academic time to fans, specifically rejecting the focus on terrace culture, fanzines and fan resistance to the transformation of English football. He responds to that transformation by accepting its premises (and therefore effects on supporters), and seeks a focus on the professional elements of football (referees, players, agents) that mark it out as an industry, and a site of employment. The only elements in this agenda that address supporters, apart from 'the ways football merchandise is actually consumed' (Moorhouse, 1998: 231), are phone-ins and shareholding, which 'deserve at least some of the attention lavished on fanzines'. This ignores the control exercised over most phone-ins by radio stations, to the point where they lose most, if not all, social and cultural significance: no matter what value should be attached to fanzines, it clearly seems inappropriate to equate these independent, active, cultural spaces (active players in nearly every major fan campaign since the mid-1980s) with restricted, controlled radio phone-ins. Radio stations have an often symbiotic, some might say subordinate, relationship with football clubs, which prevents their phone-ins from addressing anything of genuine political import. Even on the BBC, little serious analysis appears. John Williams (1994: 5) makes this complaint about the most renowned British phone-in, '6-0-6' on BBC Radio 5. To this extent, these programs are generally irrelevant to any serious analysis. Since many radio presenters adopt partisan and closed positions, 'debating' anything becomes impossible.⁵ As for shareholding, there is little evidence to suggest that floatation of a club has resulted in many fans buying shares, or that many fan shareholders keep their shares long past an initial surge in price. Furthermore, as Manchester United fans recently discovered, the significance of most such shareholdings within the club is minimal, and offers no real leverage against the club board, or the power of global capital.⁶ Considerations of phone-ins and shareholding would not appear, therefore, to offer any great insight into the processes crucial to the transformation of English football. While a focus on its professional elements would highlight key issues (like youth training), to deliberately foreground this and phone-ins over fans and

fandom seems excessive. Certainly, the changing nature of the crowd, the increasingly diverse ways of following and interacting with football, and the factors that construct and mediate such fandoms, do not feature on the agenda Moorhouse (1998) outlines.

Since sociology has traditionally been the study of social cleavage and social relations within capitalism, why should sociological analysis of football be seemingly prepared to ignore visible social cleavages within the crowd created by capitalist processes? While the Football Taskforce commissioned research on exclusion in 1998, this was for policy purposes and was not intended to offer a genuine, in-depth analysis of the issue. Generally, however, sustained attention has been absent, and in many discourses, the New Right assault on class (Gamble, 1994) would appear to have had its desired effect, reducing social relations to the operation of a free market, and eliminating outcomes of market processes as a matter for concern. New Labour ideologies offer little help, openly foregrounding the interests of the middle classes, leading to complaints from left-wing members of parliament that the party has 'lost touch' with its historically-defined working class constituency. Previous divisions in crowd demography along lines of race and gender justifiably attracted academic analysis (Bains & Patel, 1997; Merkel & Tokarski, 1996; Williams & Woodhouse 1991; Williams, 1994), but even those who focus on race and gender would have to accept that the recent growth in minority and female attendance can, by definition, only include those with the financial means to participate, as Richard Giulianotti (1999: 164-5) argues. Class and economic conditions are not supplanted by race or gender: the monetary demands required to participate in modern football clearly constrain what *sort* of female or minority fans can access the game. This makes income and club ticketing and pricing policies of central importance. To take Liverpool FC as an example, there is little reason to believe that the growing numbers of Asian and black fans visiting Anfield are local: the economic circumstances of districts like Granby and Abercromby, where Liverpool's minority communities are predominately located, are hardly conducive to regular attendance at Anfield. Black youth unemployment in 1991 in Granby stood at fifty per cent, and was 51.6 per cent in Abercromby (Liverpool City Council, 1991: 22). Conditions in neither district have changed sufficiently in the years since these figures to substantially improve these areas' economic standing, during which time the price of the cheapest tickets at Anfield have nearly trebled, from £7 to £20. The growing black and Asian constituencies at Anfield instead appear to originate predominately from London and the West Midlands, and to this extent, the changing racial mix of Liverpool's crowd cannot be seen as a form of genuine social inclusion for minority fans so long as it remains so heavily mediated by local and national class and income divisions, and by club ticketing operations that seek out the most lucrative markets regardless of location,

More widely, exclusion will undoubtedly have an impact on fandom: is it genuinely known how the excluded engage with their club, and with football more generally, over the period of exclusion? What happens to the interest excluded fans can sustain when they can no longer access the live experience, or no longer find it stimulating as the match-day experience is transformed? These issues have not yet been addressed, yet the implications of such analysis are manifold, illuminating the relationship between fan and club (and the game in abstract),⁷ and the significance of sociability, shared fandom and communality to fan experiences, the formation and sustaining of social networks and individual and group identity. Manchester United independent supporters group IMUSA, for instance, recently suggested that violence seen at Old Trafford in the last two years is the response of local, male working class fans to their exclusion.⁸ Such a motive has yet to be confirmed, but it is a plausible reaction to exclusion, particularly given the resentment that appears to be growing amongst these local United fans towards the ever-expanding army of United supporters from across the UK and further afield.⁹

Alongside exclusion, analysis of opposition to current trends or their implications for specific groups of fans is also absent from Moorhouse's agenda: more generally, accounts of opposition to modern business processes, or of certain fans seeking to re-establish their own space within football's rapidly changing culture, often do not expound the nuances of their position (Brown, 1998). Instead, opponents are accused of being stuck in a rose-tinted nostalgic time-warp, their opposition collapsed into support for a demonised past of violence, sexism, racism and poor facilities. The often uneven nature of opposition to football's modern business philosophy is thus rarely unpacked and analysed,¹⁰ particularly for those who (seeking a return to terracing or standing areas at stadia in the top two English divisions) foreground communality and collectivity within fandom. Consequently, a chance to unpack a specific (by no means universal) school of fandom, identify its core values and guiding principles and its key social interactions, is passed up. Instead, there is a view, common to both the game and many journalists, that the 'modernisation' of sports must be simply accepted, with top clubs routinely countering criticism of their policies by highlighting the 'progress' of the 1990s. Modernisation's uneven impact on different supporters are, at a deep conceptual level, ignored, or subordinated to the progress made for specific elements of the crowd. Seemingly, therefore, modernisation must be accepted even by those whose fandom and attendance patterns have declined or disappeared altogether. One of the most common refrains is that rising ticket prices are simply the inevitable cost of signing the best players and re-developing stadia, of creating a successful club capable of competing at the highest European levels. As a justification for the impact on the excluded, and for commercialisation, this ignores the possibility that exclusion through increasing ticket costs eliminates the core of

a specific form of fandom and therefore damages support for clubs, successful or otherwise. Without detailed analysis, it is hard to accept at face value the notion (that flows from the logic of the top clubs outlined here) that fans on the edge of exclusion from the game would accept their own marginalisation as part of the processes deemed essential for their team to succeed.

What is the long-term relationship between, for instance, excluded Chelsea fans and their rapidly changing, increasingly successful club (at the forefront of many current commercial trends)? This cannot be answered without systematic research that addresses the shifting nature of fandom over a period of exclusion. Analysing the peaks and troughs in excluded fans' interest in successful clubs would be particularly fruitful, since these fans would experience their team's success in a 'remote' (TV-mediated) rather than personal fashion. The logic that justifies exclusion as the price of success rests on two crucial, yet untested, assumptions: (a) that fandom can survive exclusion in the first place, and (b) that the social practices of certain forms of fandom eliminated in football's transformation are not *in themselves* central to those fandoms. Reluctance to address these issues does not just result in passive collusion with processes of exclusion by ignoring them, but actively denies academia potentially rich data on particular forms of fandom, how they relate to other social forces and changes in the life course, and how they can adapt to new circumstances. One possibility is that exclusion can increase interest in participatory football: equally, research into information sources of fans on Merseyside found some evidence that the excluded are more likely to use local radio as a key means of interacting with their club (Taylor & Nash, 1999).

General appeals to progress are often combined with contingent 'evidence' of the benefits of modernisation to deflect opposition to the modern game. One journalist, for instance, asked those opposed to Sky's bid for Manchester United 'in a shopping mall and multiplex culture, why should football remain the exception to modernising forces? The game's heritage-mongers seem to want it to remain an oasis of nostalgia, steeped in an ambience defined by wooden rattles and Bovril' (Williams, 1998: 4). Alongside the dismissive and crass stereotyping of opposition to Sky, and the total refusal to address the specifics of that opposition, no attempt is made to explain why football should be subjected to 'modernising forces', nor why global capital should be allowed to simply sweep all before it. Change, apparently, no longer even requires justification. Instead, those objecting to the purchase of their club by one of the most powerful global media forces are simply condemned as stuck in a nostalgic past, their opposition collapsed into romantic support for a heritage of exclusion and violence. Crucially, 'modernising forces' is left entirely unpacked and simply stands, to be understood and accepted as if the strategies open to football in the 1990s are so limited, and therefore obvious, as to brook no debate or opposition. Equally, in an incredible

argument, respected financial sports journalist Patrick Harverson (1998: 25) dismissed all opposition to football's new processes on the grounds that they are making the game 'better': 'Football's Luddites should stop dreaming. The game's modernisation is an irreversible process dictated by the forces of change beyond the fans' control'. Again, no conception of the possibilities that (a) the specific nature of modernisation in the 1990s might be contestable territory, and (b) that modernisation could already have excluded the 'Luddites', so legitimating a struggle to 'regain control' of the game (not that such control even genuinely existed, of course). Adam Brown and Andy Walsh (1999: 61-3) note the practical difficulties opponents to Sky's bid for Manchester United faced in getting past the accusation of 'nostalgia'.

Academics have been equally critical: James Walvin (1994: 191) calls opposition to change 'perhaps . . . the real British disease; that clinging to the wreckage of tradition, that refusal to contemplate alternatives to old habits'. While Ian Taylor (1995: 29) notes the likely impact of rising prices on the crowd, he nonetheless exhorts us to stop 'bemoaning the loss of the "true" terrace football supporter', and John Williams (1993: 14) notes the 'inert and reactionary opposition which in some quarters has greeted necessary aspects of the post-Hillsborough modernisation'. That change of some order was necessary post-Hillsborough is elided into support for change of a particular *commercially-driven* order, whose only justification is itself the need for change post-Hillsborough. When challenged, the chosen form of modernisation is defended by the *general* need to modernise, and by juxtaposition with a demonised past. Logically, opposition becomes impossible, confronted by a circular argument in which all features of the past collectively stand condemned because the present is better, and any opposition to modern processes equated with uncritical support for the dereliction of the past. It is crucial to note that modernisation *is*, quite clearly, contested terrain, a fact that many prefer not to recognise or consider: the modernisation proposed by Lord Justice Taylor after the 1989 Hillsborough disaster was much wider than that which has been subsequently carried out, in that it conceded less ground to capital and the interests of clubs and sought a far greater role within football for supporters and government. The concept of mutualisation constructs another form of modernisation (Michie, 1999), while Conn (1997) suggests other, non-capitalist avenues of change. The example of seven top German clubs who recently agreed to share European TV revenues with the other teams in their division (*The Times*, 1999) highlights the different strategies that can arise from, and underpin, modernisation and the business of football.

Yet from my research into independent fan groups in the 1990s [Nash, 1999], those who oppose elements of football's current project turn out, in fact, not to be the last defenders of the 'young white males of little education and even less wit' that Taylor (1995: 15) so vehemently attacks, nor are they

uncritical about the past. Instead, they are positively 'progressive' towards the right of all fans to attend, including corporate spectators, actively support the rights of minority, disabled and female supporters, co-operate with opposition fans, oppose and disown violence and seek specific changes to (and radical re-conceptualisations of) stadia. If they can be summarised, these groups (run by upper-working and middle class fans) primarily seek a plurality of social spaces and backgrounds within stadia, a combination of the affective, traditional, economic and 'modern' that does not sit well with the exclusionary market approach of top clubs.

Equally, campaigners against Everton's proposed move from Goodison Park, who were roundly condemned by their club and journalists for refusing to acknowledge 'reality', commissioned architects to redesign Goodison, creating a hi-tech 50,000 all-seater proposal including corporate hospitality and more expensive 'premier class' seating.¹¹ Crucially, this would have kept Everton at their original ground in their original locality within Liverpool, and maintained some of its traditional features, while still allowing Everton to develop new revenue streams. This is a clear example of how opposition to profit-driven change (the move from Goodison) can simultaneously incorporate the 'modern' and 'financially viable' with the traditional and affective, a combination many seem incapable of theorising. Nor were those campaigning at Liverpool in the early 1990s to preserve the Kop terrace advocating the maintenance of some violent, masculinist space within the ground, but opposed sexist and racist abuse, and suggested changes to the Kop to upgrade toilets and refreshments, and the view of the pitch (Mackin, 1998).¹² However, campaign leader John Mackin noted that 'if you argue against all-seaters, you are immediately portrayed as advocating the kind of football that saw us standing on crumbling, uncovered, freezing terracing where the only toilet was a brick wall and all there was to eat was cold pies and crisps. Being anti-seats means that you also want to see large-scale rioting and hooliganism as well, I suppose' (Mackin, 1998). Moreover, as John Horne (1995) argues, fanzines have the capacity (though not always realised) to combine elements of traditional fandom with anti-racism, and occasionally anti-sexism. Many anti-racist activists at Leeds United in the 1980s later re-surfaced as defenders of many elements of traditional fandom (including terraces) in both the Football Supporters Association and local fan groups. Academic judgements of such proposals are entirely another matter, but the evidence cannot be airbrushed, nor the reality of what opponents seek twisted: some of the accounts of fan opposition to modern football noted here indicate either a lack of research, or a total disinterest in what opponents actually argue.

To seek greater clarity in the use of concepts like resistance, and a proper role for the business basis of modern football, as Moorhouse (1998) does, is one thing; to attempt to re-define the future direction of sociological interest in

football is another entirely, particularly since his current agenda is too restrictive, and accepts the premises of football's transformation too easily. Essentially, this debate centres on the fault-line between the New Right economic approach (the market agenda of consumption and profit that, by its very nature, cannot comprehend concepts like exclusion, fairness or community), and a politically informed approach; this recognises, out of necessity, that football is an economic concern, but seeks to impose on that a sense of the cultural, to identify the impact of the sport's economic basis on its different constituencies of fans, and on the social aspects that have delineated it from purely economic activity. While it may appear that this paradigmatic gap cannot be bridged, there are ways in which sports can be conceptualised as economic in basis, yet social in nature, and of significance precisely because they are social. One such issue is the nature of fandom in a de-localising age, when top English clubs are becoming global brands consciously designed for export and worldwide consumption. The biggest regularly undertake global exhibition tours,¹³ and have developed merchandising and marketing operations to take advantage of the fan-bases that can be created and sustained by such tours, and more generally by global TV coverage of the Premier League. Within this context, what is the nature of identity and fan culture based around globalised fandom mediated by satellite TV and lacking genuine social interaction with the 'home' town or country? How do Chinese Manchester United fans relate to, and identify with, the club, stadium, city, or local United fans? How can active football tourism be related to social cleavage, and what is the relationship between local fans and non-locals enjoying (apparently) preferential treatment from clubs? As the global football industry develops, so the relationship between fans and the game could start to radically change and crystallise in a new form, transforming the social meanings of fandom. This has a clear economic base (the flows of global capitalism, and the centrality of marketing and branding), but imposes on it a cultural and political layer.

This also applies within the confines of the nation-state, with the coming Pay Per View (PPV) revolution: what will fans use PPV coverage *for*? Are there race, gender or class implications in PPV fandom and to what extent could it offer a solution to exclusion? Is PPV simply another way for 'couch-potatoes' to absorb commodified culture, or can it be used to recreate traditional, or new, forms of interaction? It would be easy (and crass) to dismiss PPV as simply another form of commercialisation, as Taylor (1995: 26) notes, but without some sense of what fans get from it, how it interacts with social formations, the roles played out in its context, and the forces that inform fans' choice of PPV over active attendance, the picture will remain entirely incomplete.

The significance of the potential implications for fandom is clear, existing in a new context with fundamentally new ways for fans to interact with the game. The focus on fans (and the symbolic and social practices that inform

types of fandom) therefore remains important in the study of football in a business age. There is (again some anecdotal) evidence that supporters whose fandom was historically formed around communality and participation, to some extent, actually prefer the social interaction around TV fandom. This can be seen, for instance, in the bizarre spectacle of thirty Liverpool fans standing in the concourse of West Ham's ground in September 1998 when, having paid £26 each for a ticket, they chose to watch the closing ten minutes live on TV, twenty yards from where the action was taking place 'in the flesh'. In this way, they were able to engage with the game and each other in a communal and participatory fashion, free (briefly) from the surveying of fan behaviour within stadia (Armstrong, 1998). Equally, there are numerous accounts of Liverpool season-ticket holders choosing to stay in pubs with their friends at kick-off rather than going into fixtures, and giving up their match tickets, and the declining attendances at some games televised live by Sky. Such evidence is anecdotal and in need of systematic investigation, but it is potentially significant in highlighting the precise importance of much derided values of communality, participation and social interaction to fandom, and to the attractiveness of attendance. This is particularly the case as the differential between ticket prices and the cost of satellite subscription (especially if shared) increases. Gary Armstrong (1998: 332) found similar sentiments amongst groups of Sheffield United fans: 'many no longer attended, as admissions 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'. Those alienated by modern experiences of live football could well form an important element of future markets for PPV, while satellite coverage might already be acting as a replacement for attendance amongst the excluded or disenchanting. Analysis of these issues would benefit the modern football business, a business that will not be fully explicable or understood, without a full understanding of the increasingly diverse components of the football market. Communality is also undoubtedly one reason why many, particularly male, fans now prefer to watch their team play away rather than at home.

Of course, the question of research funding cannot be ignored. As English football professionalises, so it increasingly requires research on issues relevant to its business needs, like marketing. Clearly, the best opportunities to obtain research funding in this context arise from addressing professional aspects of the game. To put it bluntly, there is obviously less scope for obtaining funding for research into supporters, since this offers, on the face of it, little to the game, compared to analysis of marketing, sponsorship, diversification, youth development etc. To this extent, given the increasingly heavy expectations placed on British academics, particularly within the context of the Government's Research Assessment Exercise, Moorhouse's (1998) football-as-

industry agenda makes a certain sense. But the industry's particular needs should not restrict academic research into football and invalidate whole other areas of discussion, since those highly specific needs do not cover the breadth of academic interest.

Indeed, as top clubs become openly 'customer'-led and market-driven, they should be far more concerned with the implications of exclusion, for good business reasons. If the excluded do genuinely lose interest, there are potential implications for the amount of merchandise they will buy, how often they will take advantage of stadium 'leisure experiences', including cafes, visitor centres, museums, quiz nights, and the level of interest they can pass onto their children as the next generation of fans. Ninety-five per cent of football supporters do not actively attend games (Oliver & Ohlbaum 1997: 13), but contribute millions of pounds to the industry annually in other ways. Within this constituency, the excluded are, by definition, distinct from those who never sought to attend in the first place. The forces that shape non-attending fans' attitudes, and ultimately therefore their consumption patterns, are clearly important to football's long-term future, and particularly top clubs' attempts to maximise profit and generate brand loyalty. Equally, the notion that excluded fans might seek out lower division football, with cheaper and more easily available tickets, local fan-bases and active crowds, maybe different match-day cultures, could open up new revenue streams for smaller clubs, such as Chester City, Tranmere, Barnet, Bury or Darlington, overshadowed by large, glamorous neighbours. Again, however, the nature of this potential market remains to be explored. These are areas where a focus on fans and the changing nature of fandom can have direct implications for the football business at a variety of levels.

Even if the commercial logic of football fully works itself out, such as in Sky's bid for Manchester United, and concepts like localism, topophilia, identity, class and loyalty lose their currency, how is their irrelevance to be recognised if academic interest has already been directed elsewhere? If research no longer addresses such concepts, how will it be possible to assess the changing nature of fandom within the business age, and therefore the changing nature of the sport? That much of the 'evidence' cited here is anecdotal is *precisely* the point, in that it highlights current gaps in knowledge and thinking that will persist if attempts to reframe academic agenda succeed. There is a need to accept the validity of a range of interests: if academia is asked to look beyond fanzines and terrace culture, as Moorhouse (1998) and others do, then it must also be allowed to look beyond business processes and those who have benefited from its transformation, to those whose experiences of football have declined or been eliminated altogether by it. Their potentially changing attitudes towards the game can reveal much about fandom in professional sport, and how far business penetration can proceed before it begins to damage, or fundamentally shift, that sport's foundations.

NOTES:

- ¹ An earlier version of this article was presented as a paper to the *Post-Graduate Sports History and Sociology* conference at De Montfort University, September 1998. Thanks go to delegates for their comments (particularly Dr Mike Cronin, and to the reviewers).
- ² King (1997b) notes how Manchester United target Ireland for active fans, as do Liverpool with Norway (interview with senior member of Liverpool FC Scandinavian Supporters Club, 1998). Newcastle United plan to market the expanded St James Park to the South East of England, Scotland, Holland and even Iceland (private communication, 1998). Undoubtedly, this support is not purely created by clubs, and can have a local history of some decades, but clubs' deliberate targeting of these high-spending fans also needs to be recognised.
- ³ Everton defended a 32 per cent increase in ticket prices in summer 1999 (to an average of £360) by arguing that their prices remained amongst the cheapest in the Premier League (BBC1 *North West Tonight*, 12 July 1999). Precisely how this helps those who *still* cannot afford the prices charged at Everton was never explained.
- ⁴ It is possible that, alongside those who cannot afford tickets, there are fans losing interest in attending following the transformation of match-day culture.
- ⁵ Like ex-Manchester United player, Paddy Crerand, renowned for abusing Manchester City fans who call his radio phone-in, defending his ex-club in all circumstances, and simply cutting off callers he disagrees with.
- ⁶ In the form of Rupert Murdoch, whose Sky company bid £623m for United in September 1998: at the shareholders' level, fans could not block the bid, and it was only after a massive political campaign by supporters that it was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1999 (Brown & Walsh 1999).
- ⁷ Such analysis would, for instance, have helped clubs like Third Division Chester City, who tried (and failed) in 1997-98 to attract fans of bigger local clubs (Everton, United and Liverpool) to their home games.
- ⁸ Comment by IMUSA Committee member, meeting in Liverpool, July 1998. After at least three games in seasons 1997-98 and 1998-99 (against Liverpool, Chelsea and Leicester City), 200 excluded lads from one particular Salford pub congregated to attack visiting fans at the final whistle. Unconfirmed reports suggest that the violence was primarily aimed at those wearing club shirts or carrying merchandise, not the opposition 'lads'.
- ⁹ As pointed to in the minutes of the Government's Football Taskforce meeting in Manchester (February 1998), where one United fan complained 'those Southern bastards are stealing all our tickets'.
- ¹⁰ 'Uneven' as argued by King (1997b). where resistance is rarely coherent or internally logical: instead, fans resist dominant positions on certain issues and comply on others,

often in a contradictory fashion, that does not contribute to the creation of a sustainable alternative political economy of the game.

¹¹ The redesign appears at (<http://evertonfc.merseyworld.com/gfe.htm>).

¹² John Mackin was leader of the *No Kop Seats* campaign at Liverpool FC.

¹³ Manchester United, Newcastle, Chelsea, Liverpool and Arsenal all sent sides to the Far East between 1997-9. United also received £1.8m for touring Australia in 1999, and are widely believed to have participated in the FIFA Club World Championship in Brazil primarily for the global marketing opportunities it presented.

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