

**THE SAFE STANDING MOVEMENT IN ENGLISH FOOTBALL (1989-2019):**

***TIMESCAPES, TACTICS AND NETWORKS***

MARK TURNER

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## ABSTRACT

Twenty eight years after the Taylor report into the Hillsborough stadium disaster recommended that all Premier League and Championship football grounds in England and Wales should become all-seated, the UK Government Sports Minister Tracey Crouch, in June 2018, announced a government review into the safety of modern standing areas and whether new developments in stadium safety and spectator accommodation, might justify changing the current all-seating legislation to permit Safe Standing. In October 2019, the review concluded that there remains significant scope for further research to build an evidence base to trial different standing areas, alongside monitoring clubs taking different approaches to the management of standing. These recent events are the outcome of a thirty-year social movement in which a critical mass of football supporters, through the networks they formed, have built relational collective action across the neoliberal *timescape* of English football from 1989-2019. This thesis presents a social movement analysis of Safe Standing and in doing, produces a largely untold thirty year social history of English football supporter activism. To achieve this, it applies a relational sociology approach (Crossley, 2011; 2015) to capture the importance of football supporter networks, relationships and interactions which built this social movement across different temporal periods, or what Gillan (2018) refers to as multiple *timescales*. It offers an original contribution to knowledge of football supporter social movements through a rich micro-level analysis of *the* most important issue which fans collectively coalesce around, and the legacy of *the* worst sporting disaster in the UK, which has dominated public consciousness for thirty years. And as a social movement, I argue Safe Standing is one of the most important recent development in the game, because it evidences how supporters, who have been deeply affected by the all-seating legislation, are now in a position to affect the future consumption of English football. My analysis showed how this was achieved, and argued that a small core network of approximately 30 supporters, to which I gained *insider* access,

stand to potentially impact and shape the consumption habits of a leisure practice all over the world. In doing so, the thesis represents the most comprehensive study ever conducted on the 30 year movement against the all-seating legislation and offers an important social history which informed both the focus of the government review and its primary conclusions.

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my stepfather, Tony. We have stood and sat together watching football for thirty years. Thank you for giving me this. I've put it all into this PhD.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

- FSF.** Football Supporters Federation
- FSA.** Football Supporters Association
- NFFSC.** National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs
- FSI.** Football Supporters International
- FSE.** Football Supporters Europe
- ISAs.** Independent Supporters Associations
- CoFS.** Coalition of Football Supporters
- StandAMF.** Stand Against Modern Football
- IMUSA.** Independent Manchester United Supporters Association
- INUSA.** Independent Newcastle Supporters Association
- SISA.** Southampton Independent Supporters Association
- TISA.** Tottenham Independent Supporters Association
- AISA.** Arsenal Independent Supporters Association
- BIFA.** Sheffield United Supporters Association
- SD.** Supporters Direct
- APFSCIL.** Association of Provincial Football Supporters' Clubs in London
- ISACCN.** Independent Supporters Association Communication and Coordination Network
- FLAG.** Football Alliance Action Group
- PLAC.** Premier League Action Committee
- HOSTAGE.** Holders of Season Tickets against Gross Exploitation
- SUAM.** Shareholders against Murdoch
- MUST.** Manchester United Supporters Trust
- SOS.** Spirit of Shankly
- KFS.** Keep Flags Scouse
- RTK.** Reclaim the Kop
- TAW.** The Anfield Wrap
- BAFF.** Association of Active Fans
- NFW.** New Football Writing
- WSC.** When Saturday Comes
- FMTTM.** Fly Me to the Moon

**KUMB.** Knees up Mother Brown

**ALS.** A Love Supreme

**RSL.** Revolutionary Socialist League

**DCMS.** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

**FA.** Football Association

**PL.** Premier League

**FL.** Football League

**PFA.** Professional Footballers Association

**FLA.** Football Licensing Authority

**SGSA.** Sports Ground Safety Authority

**ACPO.** Association of Chief Police Officers

**FSOA.** The Football Safety Officers Association

**SMO.** Social Movement Organisation

**NSM.** New Social Movements

**PPT.** Political Process Theory

**SAFE.** Standing Areas for Eastland/England

**SUSD.** Stand Up Sit Down

**HFSG.** The Hillsborough Family Support Group

**HJC.** The Hillsborough Justice Campaign

**FTF.** Football Task Force

**SNA.** Social Network Analysis

**EDM.** Early Day Motion.

**APFG.** All Parliamentary Football Group

**APPF.** All-Party Parliamentary Group for Football

**APPG.** All-Party Parliamentary Group for Football Supporters

## INTRODUCTION

### THE RITUAL OF WATCHING FOOTBALL: A THIRTY YEAR SOCIAL HISTORY

This thesis is about the ritual of watching football and the collective memories and meanings which supporters give to it through the relationships and interactions they form inside the stadium. For most supporters throughout the twentieth century, this ritual involved standing on football terraces as a cultural practice. And this became important sociologically, because it constituted a public ritual in contemporary British society through which new supporter solidarities emerged. Standing together, football supporters and the social networks they formed, became a football collective and in doing so, produced the atmosphere and spectacle which are built into the collective memories and social histories of generations of men, women and children in Britain. And thus this ritual shaped supporters' emotional connection to the game through the public and passionate display of movement and noise which in turn became a cultural identity. Whilst the level of emotion, ritual and memory attached to standing on football terraces varied for different supporters, what bound them together according to Wagg (2004), was the *mythic* sense of freedom to actively express support in ways which were not over regulated or over constrained, producing what King (1998) referred to as the 'ecstatic solidarity of the terrace'.

Despite this, by 1985, English football was generally played poorly in front of dwindling crowds of increasingly violent and often racist men in unsafe and unsanitary football grounds which had little market value (King, 1998; 2003). Consequently, the British media and UK government began to increasingly demand that football be brought into line with the direction of broader social and economic change. After the Hillsborough stadium disaster in 1989, resulting in the deaths of 96 Liverpool supporters, the free market

demands for the new consumption of football became dominant and this was achieved in part through the development of all-seated stadia in the top two divisions in England. In his final report into the Hillsborough disaster, Lord Justice Taylor who led the public inquiry commissioned by the UK government, stated;

Whilst there is no panacea which will achieve total safety and cure all problems of behaviour and crowd control, I am satisfied that seating does more to achieve those objectives than any other single measure', and that over time, 'spectators would become accustomed and educated to sitting.

(Lord Justice Taylor, 1990, p.12-14).

King (1998) documented the important social and cultural effects which replacing traditional standing terraces had on the game from 1985 to 1995 and described the speed and extent of this transformation as extraordinary. In this thesis, I extend the analysis of King (1998) across different temporal periods, or what Gillan (2018) called multiple *timescales* (from 1989-2019), in order to examine the longer term impact which all-seated stadia in English football has had on supporters' consumption of the game and their ritual of watching football. In doing so, I argue that whilst continuing to expand football's wider public appeal as a modern inclusive game, the imposition of all-seated stadia and the subsequent increases in admission prices and surveillance of supporters, represented the most significant assault on English football fan culture and has become *the* most important issue which fans collectively coalesce around.

This is important for two reasons. Firstly, there is a plethora of sociological research which has examined supporters' interaction with the game at specific football clubs and particular cases of supporter mobilisation and activism. As Hill et al. (2018) note, football fans' social networks are often divided by long established lines of club rivalry and isolation and thus research has tended to focus on supporters' critical engagement with modern football through opposition to single clubs. Consequently, there is a dearth of research into cases of social unrest which connect supporters beyond club-specific networks. And I

argue, the most significant case which addresses this research gap is the imposition of all-seated stadia in the top two divisions of English football since 1994. Secondly, most club-specific cases of supporter mobilisation and activism have examined the tensions of English football's globalisation and the global flow of images, capital and people which exist in the contemporary game today, and experienced at particular high profile clubs (Millward, 2011). However, I argue the imposition of all-seated stadia is an important case study because it extends the analysis of supporters' interaction with modern football at specific clubs to the state itself through the specific all-seating license prescribed in secondary legislation by the Secretary of State under the *Football Spectators Act 1989* (SGSA, 2019). Moreover, the assessment of the longer term impact of the all-seating legislation on supporters must recognise the political reality of this situation and the symbolic nature of a policy drafted in the aftermath of what remains the worst sporting disaster in the UK and which has dominated public consciousness for nearly 30 years (Rigg, 2019).

Whilst there remains little doubt that football grounds in England and Wales, are today, safer than at any point in the history of the game, the assault on standing terrace culture as *the* 'traditional' ritual of watching football has been subject to widespread criticism within both local and national supporter networks and organisations. Central to this, has been a search for authenticity in the wake of such legislative interventions which disrupted and actively replaced 'traditional' supporter relationships (Crabbe and Brown, 2004), and the argument that all-seated stadia became *the* catalyst to socially control football supporters (Turner, 2017). However, Lord Justice Taylor overstated the extent to which fans would become accustomed to the all-seating legislation and thus over the past 25 years, thousands of supporters at games played in the Premier League and Championship, to which the legislation applies, have continued to stand, but in areas not designed for them do so. And this persistent standing in all-seated stadia has become a

critical source of conflict between football clubs, supporters, stewards, police officers and various safety bodies.

In June 2018, twenty eight years after the Taylor Report into the Hillsborough stadium disaster recommended that all Premier League and Championship stadia should become all-seated, the UK Government Sports Minister Tracey Crouch announced a formal government review into the safety of modern standing areas and whether new developments in stadium safety and spectator accommodation might justify changing the current all-seating legislation to permit new Safe Standing technology. This followed recent support from both the *Premier League* (PL) and the *Football Association* (FA) to consider new evidence on whether such Safe Standing areas satisfied the safety and security concerns of various stakeholders in the football industry, including clubs, the *Sports Ground Safety Authority* (SGSA), the *Association of Chief Police Officers* (ACPO) and local safety authorities. This high profile political mobilisation is the outcome of a thirty year social movement in which a critical mass of football supporters, through the networks they formed, have built relational collective action across 1989 to 2019.

According to Gillan (2018, p.2), a social movement is a ‘collective actor - comprising of individuals, informal groups and (often) formal organisations - coordinating voluntarily to pursue a range of values or interests that bring it into conflict with perceived systems of power’. In this thesis, I stretch Gillan’s definition of social movements by drawing on Crossley’s (2011; 2015) relational sociology to highlight the ways in which such individuals, informal groups and formal organisations are networked together by way of social ties and interactions, and that these networks, relationships and interactions are linked through various forms of concrete cooperation (Diani, 2003). In doing so, the thesis documents a thirty year social history of football supporter activism in English football and argues that supporter social movements move across different *timescales* by engaging in a conflictual issue with a powerful opponent. This brings into question not only the all-

seating legislation itself, but the impact that Hillsborough had on the perception of standing terraces and the discourse that standing is more intrinsically unsafe than seating as a method of football spectatorship.

And so the thesis argues that Safe Standing emerged as a social movement in English football *across two timescales* (1989-1999 and 1999-2009) which themselves were *in* movement against the increasing neoliberalisation of the game, and the ways in which extensive changes to its economic, cultural and political structure continued to reinforce a draconian discourse in which supporter behaviour and movement are controlled. However the emergence of Safe Standing and the neoliberal transformation of English football are intimately related because as a social movement it moves not *against* ‘modern’ football but is instead embedded within the neoliberalisation *of* modern football. To show this, the thesis argues that the Safe Standing movement grew from and gave birth to other supporter movements which are networked together by important switchers. These movements; the *Football Supporters Association (FSA)*, *Independent Supporters Associations (ISAs)*, *football fanzines*, *Supporter Trusts*’, and the *Football Supporters Federation (FSF)*, bound by a commitment to social democracy and what constitutes the appropriate consumption of football, have across this thirty year social history, worked together in coalition and influenced each other indirectly. However, as social movements, they are not characterised by their organisational nature, rather as della Porta and Diani (1999, p.16) argue, are made by ‘networks of interaction between different actors which may or may not include formal organisations, depending on shifting circumstances’. As such, my research pays attention to the solidarities between core networks which connect these organisations. And this inevitably poses an important analytical question regarding the extent to which *a* social movement exists independently of *multiple* movements which is a challenge I pick up in this thesis.



At the turn of the century, path-breaking research by King (1998), Brown (1998) and Nash (2000; 2002) documented the growth of the FSA, ISAs and football fanzines as new social movements and cases of cultural contestation against the increasing commercialisation of the game. And in doing so, argued that club-based ISAs were more successful in mobilising club-specific supporter networks in an increasingly deregulated environment where there were few national issues (King, 2003). As a result, by the mid-1990's, the FSA as one of only two national supporter organisations had failed to attract a large membership and became broadly speaking, ineffective as a political organisation (King, 2003). In this thesis, I document an untold rich social history of the FSA during the first *timescale* and argue that whilst it failed to become a mass social movement, it nonetheless built a critical mass of highly resourced supporters across regional cities who themselves were fanzine writers and members of ISAs. Together, they created a small coalition based network which helped unify the two national supporter organisations at the turn of the twenty first century, and in this thesis, I argue became a mechanism to build the Safe Standing movement.

In telling this story, the thesis studies the working tactics of this small network and its changing network structure across three *timescales*, and shows that whilst new creative framing mechanisms against the all-seating legislation were adopted, the core network remained relatively small and was switched together at different *timescales* by important bridge-leaders. And so this research is significant because it shows that whilst supporter networks and interactions across English football are inevitably vast, the building of an effective social movement is not characterised by the number of active members of any supporter movement organisation, but instead by the capital and resources of a small network which is *in* movement. However, the thesis argues that whilst the strategic interactions of this small network and the various stakeholders in football have begun to successfully break down the state and its sub-actors in ways which were unachievable

twenty years ago, in doing so, they bring into question the different meanings given to Safe Standing and are producing movement outcomes which may in some cases, be unintended (Giugni, 1998). If successful in bringing about a change to the all-seating legislation, this small network of approximately 30 supporters, stand to potentially impact and shape the consumption habits of a leisure practice and ritual all over the world.

This thesis thus offers an empirical investigation into three relational stages of social movement analysis; movement *emergence*, movement *action*, and movement *outcomes* and *consequences*. To achieve this, my research question forms two parts;

(A) In what ways has the Safe Standing network of social relationships and interactions, and the particular strains and grievances which are embedded within supporters' biographies and their tactics, changed and evolved across three *timescales*?

(B) And what do the key characteristics of the Safe Standing movement, including conflict, organisational form and intersubjective motivations reveal about its socio-political environment?

To help operationalise this research question, the research aims to;

1. Investigate when, how and why the movement against the all-seating legislation emerged
2. Investigate and map the networks and biographies of core supporter activists across three *timescales*, how they were recruited and what roles they adopted
3. Investigate the ways in which this movement communicated and coordinated relational collective action
4. Investigate the particular tactics, strategies, narratives and innovations through which the mobilisation of the movement could be driven across three *timescales*

## ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

In this thesis I argue that a core network of football supporters in England, have across three *timescales* built a social movement against the all-seating legislation. To achieve this, I document the ways in which these supporters', who have been affected by this legislation, are now in a position to affect the future consumption of English football, and in doing so, have become political actors. And having become an *insider* within this core network, I gained important access to study its working tactics. Consequently, this thesis represents the most comprehensive study ever conducted on the 30 year movement against the all-seating legislation. Moreover, having been consulted for the UK government's standing at football evidence review in 2018, I argue this thesis offers an important social history which informed both the focus of the review and its primary conclusions.

Very few studies have attempted to theorise football supporter movement cases using a relational sociological framework. One recent significant contribution in this area is offered by Cleland et al. (2018) who apply similar relational touchstones as outlined here, to analyse five empirical case studies of supporters' collective action in both the UK and Europe. Employing a range of methodological approaches, these authors pay attention to several themes located in the collective action and social movement canons, such as the various communication conventions; the mobilising of resources; the tactical repertoires used; the spaces and places of organised action; and the process of recruitment, in order to centralise the importance of networks and connections. [All of] these are switched together at *timescales* to the various protests formed. In doing so, this work adopts a similar theoretical approach to my research by drawing on the work of Crossley (2011) and Crossley and Edwards (2016) to capture these connections in a way which recognises the importance of narratives within the various dimensions of networks, relations and interactions. Where I build on this work, is to centralise the importance of *temporality* in order to show how the particular waves of protest identified in the books' various cases,

must comprehend the movements that contribute to that wave in a longer *timescale* (Gillan, 2018). This requires a micro-level analysis of the storied dimensions of protest and the *vectors* and *velocities* of action to get a sense of directed movement over time. And thus my original contribution is to examine three temporal periods (*timescales*) in English football from 1989-1999; 1999-2009; 2009-2019 to analyse how Safe Standing as a social movement negotiates its socio-political environment through various economic, cultural and political interactions. In doing so, I argue that networked supporter movements like Safe Standing are characterised by ‘fuzzy’ multiple temporalities in which national supporter organisations, protest waves, and contentious politics with the state and its sub-actors, connect across multi-organisational fields (Gillan, 2018). These connections help understand the ways in which movements *emerge* in particular ways at particular moments in time, and how they are built upon (inter)action by pre-existing networks and social ties amongst supporter groups.

My research offers an original contribution to this field because by producing a temporal movement analysis of Safe Standing, I offer a rich account of when, how and why a social movement (in this case) emerges and in doing so, produce an untold social history of two national supporter organisations as networked Social Movement Organisations (SMOs); the *Football Supporters Association* (FSA) and the *Football Supporters Federation* (FSF). To achieve this, whilst the first *timescale* begins in 1989, I document an important four year period of agitation from 1985-1989 in which core networks and interactions emerged to build the social history of football supporter activism across relational fields, and in doing so, ensure my movement analysis contains a temporal sensitivity under explored in other academic research into football supporter social movements.

## STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

To help answer the research question and objectives, the thesis is split into six chapters including an Introduction and Conclusion. Chapter 1 begins the thesis by locating myself within the story of my own research project to show an awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society in which academic football research is situated. To do so involves a sociological imagination (Wright Mills, 1959) but avoids the trap of false populism within the sociology of football (King, 1998). Upon learning of the Safe Standing movement in 2010, both as a football supporter and postgraduate researcher, the chapter introduces the movement's primary goal and outlines the initial research questions which an emerging political context generated. In doing so, it critically examines the all-seating legislation and the current problem of fans persistently standing in all-seated areas. The chapter then concludes by outlining my theoretical framework to researching Safe Standing as a social movement.

Chapter 2 examines key literature within the sociology of football to historicise the social, cultural and political conditions out of which the all-seating legislation emerged and the subsequent conjunctural arguments for the reform and regulation of supporters. This chapter is important because by showing how the deepening of commercial pressures and establishment of free market arguments which informed English football's transformation created feelings of social unrest and displacement amongst some supporters, it ensures my research investigates the socio-political conditions of contemporary supporter movements like Safe Standing's historical moment or context. This is critical to understanding both *how* and *why* such movements emerge and what they reveal about their socio-political environment. To achieve this, I adopt Gillan's (2018) use of *timescape* as a concept which specifies the macro-level spatio-temporal boundaries in which the action of multiple movements are located, and apply this to the neoliberalisation of modern football during the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. Consequently, the literature review

broadly reflects the three *timescales* used in my research and ensures attention is paid to how they interact culturally, economically and politically.

Chapter 3 details the methodology and methods utilised in this research and considers the challenges that qualitative researchers face when investigating social movement networks, relationships and interactions as life histories. My research into Safe Standing adopts a social relational ontological position recognising that movement activists do exist but are embedded in social networks and a continuity of meaning. Consequently, the chapter outlines the qualitative approach used to examine the mechanisms of those patterns of connections and the meanings supporters give them intersubjectively through networked storied dimensions of protest.

Chapter 4 is the first data analysis chapter which covers the 1989-1999 *timescale*. It offers a rich social history of the FSA and football supporter activism in the wake of the Heysel and Hillsborough stadium disasters and the new consumption of football. To achieve this, the chapter examines the specific micro-level networks and interactions which built collective action across wider regions in English football and argues that a small Merseyside network became social movement early risers by agitating a collective sense of social unrest and strain amongst supporter networks nationally. In doing so, whilst the *timescale* itself covers 1989-1999, the chapter begins with a rich account of social movement agitation from 1985 to the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, and shows how connections between the FSA and football fanzines became an important mechanism to develop a culture of contestation against the increasing commercialisation of English football during the 1990s. Consequently, a small *Coalition of Football Supporters* (CoFS) network emerged which helped strengthen ties between the two national supporter organisations; the FSA and the NFFSC, and mobilise support for small-scale protests against the all-seating legislation.

Chapter 5 documents the patterns of network connections during the 1999-2009 *timescale* as the two national supporter organisations merged to become the Football Supporters Federation (FSF). As a more professionalised, London based social movement organisation (SMO), the FSF engaged in new strategic interactions with the state and footballing authorities, led by soft leaders with high levels of cultural capital and who were networked with European transnational supporter groups. During this *timescale*, the core FSF network adopted a localised Manchester City based standing campaign as a national policy area, and in doing so, produced three critical mobilisations which together created new relational tactics against the all-seating legislation. These tactics sought to reprogram the movement against the all-seating legislation by focusing on new convertible Safe Standing/seating technology as used in German football. The chapter argues that whilst the FSF Safe Standing network evolved across this *timescale*, the mechanisms which helped *move* the movement were achieved by key switchers who were previously connected across the FSA, ISAs and *CoFS*.

Chapter 6 argues that from 2009-2019, Safe Standing became part of a hyper-digitalisation of football culture through accelerated levels of digital literacy amongst supporters in and around the core FSF network. Consequently, whilst the FSF continued to lead the macro-level strategic interactions between supporters and the PL, FL, DCMS, and the SGSA, Safe Standing was characterised by rhizomatic supporter networks which complicated the collective and individual dimensions of movement activism. These networks were critical in localising the movement at club level, but produced coalitions which used digital platforms to both consume and produce modern Safe Standing football culture. Consequently, whilst these mobilisations achieved some political success in securing the government review into Safe Standing, they are producing movement some outcomes which may be unintended.

The concluding chapter answers the research question by arguing that Safe Standing emerged as a social movement in English football across the first two *timescales* (1989-1999 and 1999-2009) which themselves were *in* movement against the increasing neoliberalisation of the game. It thus argues that in order to understand the emergence of cross-club collective action by supporter networks around their consumption of football, research must pay attention to the mechanisms which connect different supporter networks and the patterns of those connections across time. The chapter concludes by setting out the thesis' limitations and directions for future research.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCING SAFE STANDING AND RELATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

#### INTRODUCTION

On the 29th August 1988, my stepfather took me to my first ever professional football match at Maine Road to watch Manchester City lose their first home fixture of the 1988-89 season 1-4 to Oldham Athletic in front of a crowd of 22,594. He sat me on one of the walls by a large exit tunnel on the Kippax Street standing terrace. A few weeks later, I graduated to sitting on one of the barriers alongside other children, of parents and grandparents who made up many of the thousands of football fans standing on the Kippax every Saturday afternoon. I was seven years old and hooked.

Eight months later, on Saturday 15 April 1989, my stepfather had travelled to Ewood Park to watch City lose 4-0 against Blackburn Rovers. I was too young to go to away matches and so I switched on the television to watch the British sport programme *Grandstand* to keep up to date with the football scores as they unfolded. At some point during that afternoon, however, I became rather confused at what was happening on the television. *Grandstand* had broken its usual coverage to communicate news of what appeared to be some form of crowd trouble during the start of the FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest at Hillsborough in Sheffield. My only recollection was hearing the game had been abandoned and that ambulances were on the pitch seeking to help Liverpool supporters who were badly injured behind the goal on the Leppings Lane terrace. This happened during my first year of watching football.

Whilst I was too young to remember everything I saw unfold on television that day, I do have vivid memories of being on the Kippax terrace that season with my stepfather.

The smell of the decrepit outdoor toilets when entering the stadium through crumbling turnstiles. The supporter selling the City fanzine *King of the Kippax* as we walked onto the terrace. The inflatable yellow bananas which City fans would throw around the crowd, and the atmosphere and songs which electrified the stadium. I also remember the perimeter fences which circled the stadium in front of each stand, preventing fans getting too close to the pitch. And so my step father came home and later that evening we learned the true scale of the Hillsborough stadium disaster; the death of over ninety Liverpool supporters (men, women and children) as a result of a human crush within two overcrowded standing central pens, with thousands of other supporters left injured and traumatised.

In 1994, the Kippax standing terrace which had an approximate spectator capacity of 18,000, was demolished after the final match of the season to comply with the new all-seating legislation as recommended by the Taylor Report into the Hillsborough disaster, and included in the *Football Spectators Act* of 1989. I was thirteen years old. My stepfather and I were displaced to the all-seated Platt Lane Stand, and it was at this point my younger brother entered our Manchester City lifeworld. The Kippax was replaced in October 1995 by a three-tiered all-seated stand which held approximately 14,000 spectators at a cost of £16 million. We never returned to the Kippax and remained in the Platt Lane Stand until the club eventually left Maine Road in 2003 and relocated to the City of Manchester Stadium which had been recently built to host the 2002 Commonwealth Games. In doing so, we formed new relationships with other supporters, we laughed together, we cried together, we sang together, we drank together, and we eventually moved to the new stadium together. Thirty years later, I am still going to football matches with my stepfather and brother and we still sit with the same five supporters we made friends with twenty years ago, one of which became an usher at my wedding in 2015. Those relationships and connections matter.

The game has changed dramatically. All Premier League and Championship stadiums are now all-seated and matches are no longer regularly played on Saturday at 3pm. The City of Manchester stadium has a new name; the *Etihad*, which is characteristic of English football's globalisation (Giulianotti, 1999; Millward, 2011; May, 2018), and represents a particular juncture in the English game whereby a transnational Arab airline not simply sponsors, but gives its name to a traditionally working-class space of collectivism and identity. My stepfather no longer reads the City football fanzine *King of the Kippax* and spends most of his spare time interacting with other fans on the online football message board forum; *Bluemoon*, characteristic of what Millward (2008, p.299) termed a 'new cultural football supporter movement', through which fans interact and 'publicly debate subjectively important issues' in new online spaces.

In 2010, my stepfather and I were drinking a beer in the Mitchell Arms pub before a home fixture when he began discussing a football fan campaign he'd read about on the forum. Later that week, I read a comment piece in the *Independent* newspaper by the Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament, Don Foster, which called for the same thing; 'the introduction of modern Safe Standing areas at football stadia in England' (Foster, 2010). And it was from this newspaper article and my own personal social network, that the interest in this thesis' case study was originally conceived.

I begin the thesis by locating myself within the story of my own research project to show an awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society in which this research is situated. To do so, involves a sociological imagination (Wright Mills, 1959) but avoids the trap of false populism that can be a feature of writing within the contemporary sociology of football (King, 1998). Instead, I reflexively recognise myself and this thesis, as 'belonging to the same order of reality, a relational order' (Powell and Depelteau, 2013, p.3). In other words, I, as an agent-in relation, belong to the social world of football pre and post-Hillsborough, and thus my own biography cannot be understood

without reflexive consideration, of my relational interaction to and with this social world and the networks formed around it (Crossley, 2011). My football fandom is ‘not a thing, but a state of play within a vast web of ongoing interactions’ (Crossley, 2011, p.13) which include the personal relationships formed both with my family and other supporters across various temporal dimensions post-1989, and the shared meanings we give to the social world of football across these dimensions.

In conceptualising this research project, I begin here by acknowledging that my own fandom and experiences of the social world of football pre and post-Hillsborough are situated within the neoliberal *timescape* and the new consumption of English football which is documented in chapter 2. And it is this situated knowledge which contextualises the critical curiosity that the newspaper article generated both personally (as a supporter) and academically (as a postgraduate researcher). Chapter 3 considers the ontological and epistemological foundations of cultural relational sociologically in order to achieve a reflexive standpoint which recognises the important separation of this thesis as a topic of critical research, from using my own values and perspectives as the critical ones to understand the transformation of the game. In doing so, I continually question my own role in the research process and extend this to the epistemological level ‘in terms of a situated knowledge’ that seeks to be ‘both objective and critical’ (Delanty, 2005, p.125). I introduce my research of Safe Standing by returning to the newspaper article, both to critically consider the political context out of which it emerged in 2010, and to conceptualise the academic questions which it initially generated.

## ENTERING THE STORY OF SAFE STANDING

On the 9th December 2010, Don Foster MP penned his article in the *Independent* newspaper; ‘modern options allow for standing to be safe again’. Upon reading the piece,

I began to consider my own fandom and experiences of the game over the past twenty years. Whilst my entry into football is historicised by six years of standing on the Kippax terrace as a child and early teenager, my experiences of adulthood over the past twenty-five years, are characterised by watching football matches in all-seated stadia. The demolition of the Kippax was characteristic of what Anthony King (1998) famously called the ‘end of the terraces and the transformation of English football’ in his path-breaking work at the turn of the millennium. Consequently, I began to question the following; what are modern Safe Standing areas? What makes them or standing considered safe or unsafe? Why was this particular Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament effectively campaigning for them? And more importantly, why now? Where and why had Safe Standing emerged? And so I enter the story of Safe Standing in 2010, not as an auto-ethnographer, but recognise that these questions which inform my research, do themselves capture the social world in interaction, because I as a social actor, football supporter and academic researching Safe Standing form a relational network in the way I interact with Safe Standing at a specific moment in time.

It became clear that the *Independent* newspaper article sought to rationalise a Safe Standing (Football Stadia) Bill which Foster had tabled in the UK Parliament on 7 December 2010. This aimed to give all football clubs the freedom to build, or maintain existing Safe Standing areas in their stadia and to establish minimum safety criteria that must be met for such areas in football and for connected purposes. Foster’s bill emerged seven months after the UK General Election in which a hung parliament led to the formation of a Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government. Establishing this political context was important because I began to query whether the Liberal Democrats had previously discussed Safe Standing prior to the General Election in May 2010 and in doing so, identified another article published in the *Independent* by Nick Harris on 22 April titled ‘Lib Dems call for a return to ‘safe’ standing on terraces’. In it, Harris noted Foster’s pre-election commitment of exploring options to introduce Safe Standing at football

grounds in consultation with supporters, clubs and safety experts as representative of official party policy since 2008. Moreover, the article explained that Foster was acting as the political face of an official campaign coordinated by the national supporter organisation; the FSF, which had been actively campaigning for the reintroduction of standing at top level football stadia for several years (Numerato, 2018). And so as I continued to reflect upon my own position within the story of the research, I acknowledge that by reading the newspaper articles and learning of the FSF Safe Standing campaign, I like thousands of other supporters had been to hundreds of football matches since the demolition of the Kippax, and on occasions, continued to stand in all-seated areas. And whilst I had no prior knowledge of the FSF Safe Standing campaign, this nonetheless, further evidences the way in which individuals, or football fans in this case, are always already enmeshed in relations of interdependence with others and cannot be understood even theoretically apart from their relational context (Powell and Delpelteau, 2013).

## INTRODUCING THE FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS FEDERATION

Whilst chapter 2 documents the emergence of the FSF as a networked national supporter organisation in coordinating various supporter campaigns across local and national spaces of relational collective action, I offer a brief introduction here, to contextualise the formal goal of the Safe Standing movement which is broadly consistent from 2010-2018. The FSF defines itself as a free, non-partisan, non-profit making and non-party political, democratic organisation representing the rights of fans and arguing the views of football supporters in England and Wales. It is comprised of an elected national council which oversees various campaigns and policies set by members and affiliated supporter groups at an annual general meeting (FSF, 2018). Members are made up of individual supporters throughout professional and amateur football and from 2010-2018, that membership grew from over

150,000-500,000. It is clearly evident from the limited research published, that the FSF has begun to develop a more highly prominent online and offline media profile evidenced by various television and radio appearances, and the growing impact of social media (Cleland et al. 2018).

According to Brown (2002), the FSF emerged in 2002 as a result of a merge between two national supporter organisations; the FSA and the NFFSC. The FSA, as an individual supporter membership organisation itself emerged in 1985 during a period characterised by various conjunctural arguments for the reform and regulation of football and its supporters (King, 1998). As one of only two national supporter organisations, the FSA played an important role in representing the rights and voices of fans during a period of widespread social, cultural and political change in English football. Upon merging with the NFFSC to become the FSF in 2002, as a unified national supporter organisation it developed a series of objectives which aimed to initiate and support campaigns on issues of concern to football supporters, which includes Safe Standing at major football stadia in England and Wales (*FSF constitution*, 2018).

Throughout the course of 2010-2018, the Safe Standing campaign has had one consistent aim:

To persuade the government, football authorities and football clubs to accept the case for introducing, on a trial basis, limited sections of standing areas at selected grounds in the stadiums of Premier League and Championship football clubs.

(*FSF*, 2018)

During this period, the campaign had become characterised by a concern for supporter safety within conventional all-seating areas, and this chapter turns to examine the specific all-seating legislation in order to help further contextualise both Foster's bill and the emergence of this FSF coordinated protest.

## THE LEGALITIES OF STANDING AND ALL-SEATED STADIA

Old vast terraces remain ripe for sentimentality and folklore. Enduring all that danger, discomfort and piss – always the piss – justifies the time and disposable income we currently spend enjoying football on our backsides. But we're also claiming our part in a sociological phenomenon, one never more phenomenal than when pictured on the Paddocks, Jungles and Kops of 20th century Britain.

(Anderson, WSC, 2015)

This piece in the football fanzine *When Saturday Comes* (WSC) by Rangers F.C. supporter Alex Anderson captures the inescapable lure of football's lost terraces. I begin with this statement not to nostalgically romanticise the collective memories and 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983) of football supporters, but to underline the significance of football stadiums and their terraces in the creation of a national sporting heritage (Inglis, 1996) and, perhaps more importantly, 'privileged places of working class communion' (Hopcraft, 2013, p.188). According to Webber (2017), these spaces helped establish football as a mass proletarian sport; one as deeply embedded in British working-class life as the rise of the socialist movement, the Labour Party and trade unionism. It is beyond the scope of my research to chronicle the social, cultural and historical importance and development of football stadia. It is important to recognise, however, that football matches were for the majority of the twentieth century played in stadia which predominantly consisted of standing terraces (Russell 1997, Taylor, 2008).

The first attempt to convert a stadium to become 'all-seated' was led by the Coventry City chairman Jimmy Hill at Highfield Road in 1981, and considered as one method of 'taming the football crowd' during an era of fan violence (Ward and Williams, 2009). Hill's assertion that it was 'harder to be a hooligan when sitting down' captured calls to reform football towards the end of the twentieth century which is discussed in chapter 2. However, I note the complexities of the all-seating legislation here in order to capture the challenge of seeking to replace what were in many cases, over one hundred year old football



stadia, and hegemonic spaces and places, informed by notions of authentic football fan culture and identity (King, 1998).

Keppel-Palmer (2014) examined the Taylor Report and legislation that led to the introduction of all-seated stadia to consider whether those modern Safe Standing areas (referenced by Foster and the FSF) could be installed in top tier English football stadia. In doing so, he highlighted how Taylor set out the comprehensive failings of football in the late 1980s to reveal a picture of general malaise or blight over the game due to old grounds, poor facilities, hooliganism, excessive drinking, and poor leadership. Furthermore, he suggested that the context in which Taylor recommended all-seated stadia post-Hillsborough, emerged from having visited a large number of grounds which dated back to construction around the start of the 20th century. Consequently, Taylor's recommendation was 'not in itself primarily focused on safety, but rather offered as a solution to the prevailing low-level facilities at all football stadia' (2014, p.3). However, Taylor did believe that all-seated stadia and increased comfort would facilitate improved spectator behaviour and that whilst he saw no 'panacea which would achieve total safety and cure all problems of behaviour and crowd control', he remained satisfied that 'seating (would) do more to achieve those objectives than any other single measure (Taylor 1990, p.10). All-seated stadia would then allow each spectator to have *his* own small piece of secure territory and would not be 'subject to pressure of numbers behind or around *him* during the match' (Taylor 1990, p.10). And whilst chapter 2 considers the ways in which seating was part of a broader strategy to control the football crowd through improved CCTV and encourage new 'types' of supporter attendance (King, 1998), the initial focus on modernisation and safety as contextualised here is useful to introduce the legislation which emerged.

The current legislation in England and Wales under section 11(1) of the *Football Spectators Act* 1989, states that 'the Secretary of State may, by order, direct the licensing authority to include in any licence to admit spectators to any specified premises, a condition

imposing requirements as respects the seating of spectators at designated football matches at the premises; and it shall be the duty of the authority to comply with the direction'. Keppel-Palmer (2014, p.4) notes that this power was 'then used to implement the recommendations of the Taylor Report, under the formation of the *Football Licensing Authority* (now known as the *Sports Grounds Safety Authority*, herein SGSA). Initially, the recommendation would be implemented at 'certain high risk matches from the start of the 1993-1994 season and would apply to grounds in the First and Second divisions of the Football League', which are now known as the Premier League and Championship (Ferris 2000, p.78). Additionally, this would be extended to all relevant grounds by 1999.

Since the *Football Spectators Act* was passed in 1989 (and subsequently amended in August 1994), all football clubs in the English Premier League and Championship (the top two tiers of English football) have been required to provide all-seated accommodation. However, the legislation becomes ambiguous when considering clubs who play in stadia below the Premier League and Championship (Rigg, 2019). Under the *Football Spectators (Seating Order)* 1994, should a club be promoted to the Championship from League One or lower for the first time, they have up to three years to convert any standing area to all-seated accommodation. More importantly, once the ground is converted, it must remain so even if this club is relegated from the Championship back to League One. As of 2019, there are currently 72 all-seated international, Premier League and Football League grounds in England and Wales plus several others in the lower leagues (SGSA, 2019).

Whilst the legislation is clear on the requirement for Premier League and Championship clubs to play matches in all-seated stadia, on the culture of fans persistently standing in all-seated areas it remains less so. As Keppel-Palmer (2014) highlighted, the Taylor Report 'tacitly acknowledged that standing was not to be outlawed of itself' and that it 'is true that at moments of excitement seated spectators do, and may be expected to, rise from their seats' (Taylor, 1990, p.10). Furthermore, in 2008 the Department for Culture,

Media and Sport (DCMS) in a letter to the FSF, themselves emphasised that ‘at no point has it been argued that the individual spectator commits a criminal offence by standing in a seated area’. Whilst standing in seated areas is clearly contrary to ground regulations as directed by the *Football Spectators Act* (1989), the ambiguity centres upon the moment at which ‘legitimate standing’ becomes ‘too persistent’. And what constitutes a ‘moment of excitement’? Consequently, this culture of persistent standing has become central within the strategic interactions between football supporters and the state regarding Safe Standing and all-seated legislation.

#### PERSISTENT STANDING OF FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS IN ALL-SEATED AREAS

It is possible that in the early stages of conversion, there may be instances of fans standing on the seats or in front of them because they are used to standing or in order to register a protest, but I am satisfied that in England and Wales as in Scotland and abroad spectators will become accustomed and educated to seating.

(Lord Justice Taylor 1990, p.31)

On the 17 October 2015, the UK political investigative journalist and Manchester United supporter Michael Crick tweeted a photograph to his 98,000 followers on Twitter of an empty seat in the Bullens Road away stand at Goodison Park where Everton were to host a Premier League football fixture against Manchester United. This photograph captured the seat with the printed message attached; “Seat Not Sold Due to Persistent Standing on Stairs” (Crick, 2015). Minutes later, Crick tweeted another photograph, this time of a letter given to Manchester United’s away supporters upon entering the turnstiles signed by the then manager Louis Van Gaal. This stated that the club had received a reduced ticket allocation due to the crowding and blocking of aisles by standing fans at the same fixture during the previous year. Consequently, the letter asked the Manchester United supporters to remain seated in their allocated seat to prevent any future reductions in United’s away

ticket allocation. And in 2012, Louis Van Gaal's predecessor Sir Alex Ferguson had also asked United's away supporters to cooperate with stewards and officials during a Premier League match against Liverpool at Anfield after another reduction in United's ticket allocation was imposed as a result of persistent standing and the blocking of aisles during the previous 2010/2011 season (Liverpool Echo, 2012). Meanwhile, Sunderland had by Christmas of the 2011/2012 season, ejected up to 38 supporters for persistent standing and began to withdraw season tickets of those considered repeat offenders (Wilkinson, 2012).

In 2002, twelve years after the Taylor Report, the FLA conducted a report examining the nature, causes and impacts of spectators standing in seated areas at Premier and Football League grounds in England and concluded that 'there were a number of safety, crowd management and customer care issues presented by the culture of persistent standing, and that it should be eradicated as far as reasonably practicable' (SGSA, 2013). In 2013, the original findings and possible measures taken as identified in the paper were reviewed and updated in a joint statement by the SGSA, PL, FL, FA and various safety and police associations which acknowledged persistent standing to be a continued area of concern (SGSA, 2013). Dr Steve Frosdick, a consultant, researcher and expert on safety and security at sports grounds across Europe, argued that persistent standing has become an 'everyday occurrence in football, and is no more unusual than fans celebrating a goal or moving in and out of the viewing areas' (Chalmers and Frosdick 2011, p.180). These instances, which are not unique to Manchester United and Sunderland supporters, reveal that Lord Justice Taylor clearly overstated the extent to which fans would become accustomed and educated to seating. Taylor then seems to present a paradox. In one sense he suggests that over time fans would become used to sitting at football matches, yet he also appears to accept that standing at football matches is an integral component of human interaction which constitutes relational fan culture.

Whilst Foster's (2011) bill failed to complete its passage through Parliament before the end of the parliamentary session, my entering the story of Safe Standing in 2010, had nonetheless identified the initial complexities of not only the legislation, but also the ways in which standing or sitting at football matches in modern all-seated stadia, twenty years after the Taylor Report, had agitated some supporters (networked through the FSF) to form a national Safe Standing campaign. At the macro-level, some football fans are, by evidence of their membership and interaction with the FSF, seeking to protest, whilst some politicians are politicising this protest through parliamentary debate in order to seek changes to existing law or propose new legislation. Meanwhile, at football matches played in all-seated stadia every week, thousands of football fans within their various relational networks and interactions with the social world of football post-Hillsborough are refusing to remain seated. However, the real micro-level analytical questions remain unanswered. Who are these networked supporters? How and why were these networks formed? Why are they protesting? Who co-ordinates the Safe Standing campaign across the FSF and its affiliated supporter networks? What resources does the campaign have? How do those involved communicate with each other and the various stakeholders within the wider football industry? How is success defined? And what are the key obstacles and conflicts faced?

These initial questions inform my investigation into the identifications and stories told by football supporters, primarily networked with, but not limited to the FSA and FSF, since the introduction of all-seated stadia post-Hillsborough in 1989. To achieve this, I consider these stories across those three *timescales*; which broadly map the evolution of the FSA and FSF networked supporter organisations and the neoliberal *timescape* of English football (Gillan, 2018). In doing so, I recognise the importance of history by broadening one's purview from the specific political wave of Safe Standing in 2010 to the two decades which preceded it (Gillan, 2018). For Gillan (2018), this ensures attention is paid to Safe

Standing's temporal context in order to reveal important analytical information regarding how and why it emerged. These *timescales* also draw influence from Elias' 'field of transaction' which 'relate to fluid social processes made by interdependent action by interdependent actors that exist across spatial and temporal fields in the form of "conversations", "communications", "protests" or "fandoms" (Cleland et al. 2018, p.13). In this chapter, I locate my own entry into the story of Safe Standing during the third *timescale*. And through the analysis of data in chapters 4 to 6, I ensure attention is paid to how I as a researcher and supporter, interact with previous *timescales*.

Before outlining my theoretical approach to studying Safe Standing as a social movement, the chapter turns to consider how these initial questions are themselves embedded within social movement analysis. As such, the focus on temporality offers an original contribution to researching a thirty year social history of English football supporter activism, and the ways in which supporter movement's emerge, mobilise, and produce movement consequences (Gillan, 2018). And thus my research investigates the ways in which these supporter networks, relations and interactions constitute Safe Standing as a social movement across an 'uneven, unpredictable "fuzzy" temporality' (Sewell, 2005, Gillan, 2018). To achieve this, I draw upon various ways of defining social movements in order to identify four conceptual distinctions that have been drawn around the category of movements through previous debates and theoretical developments (Edwards, 2014).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CULTURAL RELATIONAL SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Goodwin and Jasper (2003) introduce the study of social movements by considering how throughout history human beings have often complained about things they dislike. This sometimes has led people to come together with others to seek to bring about change.

Examples might include people demanding opportunities to claim new rights or political and economic emancipation or seeking to fight lifestyle choices they disliked or feared (Goodwin and Jasper, 2003). As such, they define a social movement as a ‘conscious, concerted, and sustained effort by ordinary people to change some aspect of their society using extra-institutional means which lasts longer than a single protest or riot’ (2003, p.3). This definition is useful in identifying the importance of ‘durability’ within social movement activity. For example, it is not sufficient for one to stand alone outside the headquarters of a political organisation with a banner protesting against a particular policy or issue on one particular occasion. To locate this protest within a social movement, it would need to become part of some type of collective organised challenge which occurs over a period of time. Whilst Goodwin and Jasper (2003) recognise protest, whether social or political, as ‘challenging, resisting or making demands upon authorities, power holders and/or cultural beliefs by some individual or group’ (p.3), this in itself does not become *the* social movement; it may, however, become a central tactic of *a* social movement. The emphasis on durability is not considered important in the definition offered by Eyerman and Jamison (1991, p.4) who suggest ‘social movements are best conceived of as temporary public spaces and as moments of collective creation that provide societies with ideas, identities and even ideals’. However it is difficult to define what is meant by ‘temporary’. As Crossley (2002) argues, even those social movements which might, at one stage, be considered ‘new’, for example post-sixties feminism, are now around half a century old and certainly could not be considered ‘temporary’. However, Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991) focus on ‘public space’ and ‘creativity’ offers a dynamic reading of movements in the way they bring what previously might have been privatised individuals into a ‘public debate over matters of common concern’ (Crossley 2002, p.4).

della Porta and Diani (1999, p.16) offer a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between protest, identity, conflict and networks whilst stressing the importance

of durability to conceptualise protest as taking various but frequent forms. They argued that social movements are ‘informal networks, based on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilise about conflictual issues, through the frequent use of various forms of protest’. This definition reinforces the importance of collective shared beliefs and solidarity but underplays the potential disagreements and subsequent schisms and conflicts which take place in movements which are often characterised as having a ‘low degree of institutionalisation, high heterogeneity and a lack of clearly defined boundaries and decision making structures’ (Koopmans 1993, p.637). For Crossley (2002), however, whilst solidarity might be evident within some movements, it should not be taken for granted that movements are stable and thus draws on Blumer (1969) to show how the dynamics of movements work *in* movement, and have a career through which their characteristics constantly change.

These various definitions, however, must also consider how sustained interaction, collective creativity, identity and protest are themselves constructed. della Porta and Diani (2006, p.21) identify the importance of networks to ‘differentiate social movement processes from the innumerable instances in which collective action takes place and is coordinated, mostly within the boundaries of specific organisations’. Furthermore, according to Diani (2003, p.301), the benefit of approaching social movements *as* networks enables us to read them as consisting of ‘formally independent actors who are embedded in specific local contexts, bear specific identities, values and orientations, and pursue specific goals and objectives, but who at the same time, are linked through various forms of concrete cooperation and/or mutual recognition in a bond which extends beyond any specific protest action or campaign’. These networks, according to Gillan (2018, p.2) comprise of ‘individuals, informal groups and often formal organisations who coordinate voluntarily to pursue a range of values or interests that bring it into conflict with perceived systems of power’.



It is also important to recognise that movement scholarship often begins with the selection of a named movement or case which is used in public discourse and that they are typically named for their field of conflict (Gillan, 2018). However, ‘different ‘ideological currents within social movements always have vested interests in one or another label, which also signals the fact that from certain perspectives, different groups may be included or excluded as legitimate parts of the movement’ (Gillan, 2006, p.77). It is therefore important to consider how cases like Safe Standing are themselves relational and comprise of collective actors associated with an overarching sequence of mobilisation, (inter)action and demobilisation. In doing so, attention must be paid to understanding the ‘multiple temporalities that are associated with movement activity’ (Gillan, 2018, p.14). This is a challenge I pick up with the analysis of data in chapters 4 to 6.

To achieve this, I draw upon the contemporary social movement research of Gemma Edwards at the University of Manchester and her four conceptual distinctions to investigate the ways in which Safe Standing stretches and problematises them in ways which force us to rethink what social movements are. They are as follows:

- (a) Social movements are collective, organised efforts at social change, rather than individual efforts at social change.
- (b) Social movements exist over a period of time by engaging in a conflictual issue with a powerful opponent rather than being one off events.
- (c) The members of a social movement are not just working together but share a collective identity.
- (d) Social movements actively pursue change by employing protest.

These conceptual distinctions are informed by a relational turn within social movement scholarship which centralises the importance of networks (Diani and McAdam, 2003;

Saunders, 2007; Krinsky and Crossley, 2013; Edwards, 2014; Passy and Monsch, 2014). This emerged from critical discussions about the role of Social Movement Organisations (SMOs) and the injection of resources needed for successful mobilisation across those four conceptual distinctions. However, Edwards (2014) argued that research must move beyond SMOs to investigate the dynamics of various patterns of alliances, conflict and exchange that shape what a movement (as a network) looks like and how it is able to successfully mobilise resources. Consequently, for Crossley (2002), social movements do not grow out of networks nor do networks foster movements; rather movements themselves *are* networks, and in the first instance, they are the very networks that movements grow out of. Understanding movements as interpersonal networks of interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups or associations is critical to analysing how they emerge and how activists are recruited to them (Snow et al. 1980; McAdam and Paulsen, 1993). According to Taylor (1989) these interpersonal networks whilst less visible than organisations and not always engaged in public forms of protest, provide an abeyance structure and help keep those networks going during latent periods (Melucci, 1986). This is a useful conceptual insight when researching how a movement moves across different *timescales* or temporal periods and the changing external influences and connections amongst interpersonal networks and collective perceptions (McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow, 2001). Contemporary social movement research has also considered the role of new media as a resource which provides networks with the means for easy and instant communication over spatial and temporal distances, and in doing so, helps broker previously disconnected groups, grievances and ideas (Edwards, 2014). As a result, networking is no longer dependent on face-to-face interaction and is often characterised by a sprawling rhizomatic network structure with connections shooting in different directions (Chesters and Welsh, 2006).

Informed by relational thinking, my research adopts Gillan's critique of social movement *sequences* as being characterised by a fuzzy temporality, and applies his

concepts of *timescape*, *timescales*, *velocity* and *vector* to understand how the Safe Standing campaign moved across a ground which was continually shifting. For Gillan (2018) *timescape* refers to the socio-political environment in which social movements operate with the intention to include both durable patterns of interaction and the events which often serve to make social change visible. The importance of long-term or multiple *timescales* is crucial to understand how movements interact with different economic, cultural and political processes. These processes for Gillan (2018) occur with different *velocities* across varying directions which produce movement meanings, tactics and characteristics as *vectors* which move *for* change and move *against* a conflict or target. Gillan (2018) offers a conceptual distinction between different types of *vectors* (cultural, social and political) to show how they drive social movements' strategic preferences, frames, organisational form and relationships with political elites. However, the role of networks remains under-explored in Gillan's (2018) relational account of social movement *sequences* and so my research offers an original contribution to knowledge by synergising his work with Crossley (2015) and Edwards' (2014) research into relational networks, in order to examine the ways in which football supporter movements like Safe Standing, negotiate their socio-political environments across multiple *timescales*.

It is beyond the scope of my research to comprehensively discuss all of the various versions of relational sociology (Donati 2012, Donati and Archer 2015, Mische 2003; 2011, Tilly 2006; 2002, White 1995; 2002) nor do I seek to evaluate whether relational sociology can be classified as a 'well defined sociological paradigm or a challenging "relational turn" in sociology (Prandini, 2015). Rather, I begin by noting that key theoretical debates have led some relational thinkers to place the dimensions of relations, networks and interactions at the centre of sociological analysis. As a self-conscious project, relational sociology developed during the 1990s having emerged from a series of mini-conferences around themes of time, language, identities and networks (Powell and Depelteau, 2013). One

scholar, Mustafa Emirbayer, published a '*manifesto for a relational sociology*' in 1997, which captured how sociologists were frequently faced with the dilemma of whether to conceive of the social world as consisting primarily in substances or processes, in static "things" or in dynamic, unfolding relations' (Emirbayer 1997, p.281), in other words, the choice between substantialist or relationalist thinking. Relational thinkers have subsequently 'defined their work in contrast with both holist and individualist thinking in the social sciences' (Powell and Depelteau 2013, p.2).

I thus argue in this thesis that Safe Standing as a networked social movement, does not exist as a 'single ontological entity', rather is understood in terms of its 'place in relation to the other concepts in its web'. In other words, the Safe Standing movement is 'embedded in complex relational networks that are both intersubjective and public' (Emirbayer 1997, p.300). And these networks are both shaped and constrained by different historical periods. To understand this, I apply Nick Crossley's (2015) relational framework to map the territory of the Safe Standing movement in a way which affords analytical primacy to interactions, social ties (relations) and networks, which themselves stand opposite to both individualism and holism. In doing so, I recognise individualism and holism as resorting to abstract conceptions of an underlying substance in their efforts to make sense of the social world (Crossley, 2015). In applying Crossley's framework, I investigate Safe Standing as 'comprising of networks of interactions and ties, of numerous types and on various scales, between fan actors who are themselves formed in those interactions' (2015, p.68). These intersubjective networks may consist of dynamic family, friendship, political or neighbourhood ties, and it is through interaction that shared experiences and memories which give the social world of football pre and post-Hillsborough its cultural meaning. And these networks according to Mische (2011) are themselves composed of cultural processes of communicative interaction.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NEOLIBERAL *TIMESCAPE* OF ENGLISH FOOTBALL

#### INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 outlined my theoretical approach to investigating Safe Standing as a networked social movement across three temporal periods or *timescales*. In doing so, I situated my own relational biography within the story of this research to contextualise the terraced and post-terraced social world(s) worlds of English football from 1989-2019. This chapter examines the organic origins of a new wave of contemporary football supporter protests, mobilisations and social movements and locates them within the neoliberal *timescape* of English football during the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries (King, 1998; Conn, 1997). As noted, by adopting Gillan's (2018, p.1) use of *timescape* as a concept to 'specify the macro-level spatio-temporal boundaries in which the action of multiple movements are located', my research is able to investigate the socio-political conditions of contemporary supporter movements' historical moment or context. These are critical to understanding both *how* and *why* Safe Standing emerged, and what its key characteristics, including conflict, organisational form, tactics and intersubjective motivations reveal about its socio-political environment. These conditions, according to Gillan (2018) are the *vectors* which drive social movements in multiple directions within their temporal context and at different *velocities*. To achieve this, the chapter examines key literature within the sociology of football to document the social, cultural and political conditions out of which the legislation to make all top level football grounds all-seated emerged and the subsequent conjunctural arguments for the reform and regulation of football and its supporters (King, 1998). This work is broadly characteristic of Peck's (2010, p.1) conceptualisation of neoliberalism; that being an 'open ended and contradictory process of politically assisted

(free) market rule', drawing particular influences from Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman and the commitment to privatisation, trade liberalisation and the deregulation of markets (Gillan, 2018, Jessop, 2012, Fisher and Gilbert, 2013, Davies, 2016). However, as Dubal (2010) notes, neoliberalism and neoliberal flows are not homogenous, nor do they traverse national borders freely, thus the chapter examines the ways in which neoliberal governing principles are both included and excluded, and embraced and negotiated across the landscape of English football over the past thirty years. It shows how the deepening of commercial pressures and establishment of 'free market arguments as the dominant interpretation which informed English football's transformation' (King, 1998, p.128) created feelings of social unrest and displacement amongst some 'traditional' supporters (King, 1998; Conn 1997; Lee, 1998). As a result, some supporter networks were agitated into developing a relational culture of contestation against various aspects of 'modern' football, which were both compliant with and resistant towards the neoliberal *timescape* in which they were situated (King, 1998, 2003; Nash, 2000; Millward, 2011).

In mapping the chapter in this way, the literature review broadly reflects these multiple *timescales*, ensuring attention is paid to how each interacts culturally, economically and politically. Consequently, the chapter evidences what is known about the evolution of networked football supporter movements in order to identify the research gaps which this case study seeks to address. In doing so, chapters 4, 5 and 6 are able to situate the micro-level networks, tactics and mobilisations as the *vectors* and *velocities* of the Safe Standing movement within the wider context of contemporary English football and its socio-political transformation (King, 1998).

## “A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME”: CONCEPTUALISING ‘TRADITIONAL’ FOOTBALL FANDOM AND THE NEW CONSUMPTION OF FOOTBALL

What I am suggesting is that people who run professional football should think the unthinkable and abandon their traditional audience. Twenty or thirty years ago this meant the working man with or without his son. Today, more often than not, it means gangs of unaccompanied – and therefore largely uncontrolled – youths and children .... In giving him what he wants – a seat, comfortable accommodation, facilities and entertaining football – the clubs will, in time, change the nature of the game to the extent that it will no longer be so appealing to the hooligan.

(Ted Croker, FA Secretary, 1979 cited in Maguire, 2013).

Within the sociology of football literature, ‘traditional’ fandom has been generally conceptualised as having emerged during the mid to late twentieth century, as a male expression of local identity which developed through ‘standing’ terrace culture (Mason, 1980; Giulianotti, 2002; Crowther, 2006; Fawbert, 2005; Robson, 2000; King, 1998, 2003; Goldblatt, 2014). During this period, English football witnessed an intensification of supporter violence, often referred to as ‘football hooliganism’, which became ingrained within British societal consciousness as a social problem (Dunning et al. 1984, Rookwood, 2014). However, according to Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1988), the social origins of the people who took part in football-related disorder can be dated back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In their path-breaking work, Dunning et al – often (somewhat misleadingly) referred to as ‘the Leicester School’ – offered a comprehensive social history of press reportage surrounding football crowd disorder covering a 100 year period from the years before 1914 to the late 1980s. In doing so, they documented the relationship between this disorder and the broader restructuring of the working class, alternative leisure practices after the post-war consumer boom, and the subsequent declining match attendances and image of the game. Consequently, they discovered that whilst media reporting underwent a process of amplification and de-amplification, it was throughout the mid-1960s to 1970s in particular which saw a rapid increase in reported incidences of crowd disorderliness.

According to Taylor (1971), the working class' relationship to football was characterised by masculine values, industrialisation and participatory democracy which together placed an importance upon collective action as a way of building and sustaining proletarian subculture. However, as he noted, this foundation of participatory democracy was illusory whereby the reality was always that those in positions of responsibility in football, such as club directors and managers, ultimately controlled the club, and thus by the 1960s, players ceased to be part of that supporter subculture and instead became professional entertainers (Taylor, 1971; Millward, 2011). As a result, working class supporter subcultures became increasingly alienated from the professionalisation and commercialisation of the game, and wider 1960s social reforms, which according to Taylor (1971), created a working-class subcultural rump and drift towards hooliganism as an expression of cultural anguish (Wagg, 2004). Supporting Taylor's Marxist analysis of football being a political battlefield for working class resistance against increasing bourgeoisification (Hognestad, 2012), Critcher argued that the impact of professionalisation on football during the 1960s met resistance from 'young working class men anxious to assert their adolescent male working class identity against the selective consumer and armchair viewer' (1979, p.172).

Whilst some of the speculative claims made by Taylor (1971) have since been questioned for a lack of empirical evidence and reductivism (King, 1998; Millward, 2011; Webber, 2017), and failing to account for the ways in which the lower classes lost control of *their* game many years before the resurgence of spectator violence during the mid-twentieth century (Whannel, 1979), his work nonetheless historicised an important relationship between masculinity and working class culture and how the professionalisation of football resulted in clubs unhinging themselves from local working class communities (Millward, 2011). This was important because it contextualised the ways in which professional football came to define supporters' resistance as 'deviant' and the subsequent



moral panic which emerged during a period of economic recession (Greenfield and Osborn, 1998).

Stanley Cohen (1972) used the term ‘folk devil’ to capture how the media reporting of a clash between two youth subcultures; the Mods and the Rockers in 1964, created a social moral panic which resulted in increased police presence at events attended by the two groups. According to Cohen (1972), this reaction towards behaviour perceived as deviant created a process of ‘deviance amplification’ and thus further isolated these groups in a way which forced them into further deviant behaviour (Marsh and Melville, 2011). Cohen’s work became the basis for future research into mugging ‘moral panics’ and the connections between the state, law and social order during the 1970s (Hall, 1978). For Hall, the ways in which both media reporting and crime control agencies themselves conceptualised ‘mugging’, served to legitimise the increasing role of the state. By reading Taylor’s (1971) work on the societal reaction to hooliganism and the various government reports into crowd disorder in 1967, 1969 and 1984 (James, 2013) through this lens, the chapter turns to historicise how the evolution of English football safety legislation in the wake of a series of terraced stadium disasters, further strengthened the role of the state and an ideological commitment to neoliberal, free market economics (Gamble, 1994; Webber, 2017).

### *The End of the Terraces and the Football Spectators Act*

Whilst a series of reports into football ground safety date back over seventy years, including *The Shortt Report* of 1924 in response to crowd disorder at the first Wembley cup final, and *The Hughes Report* of 1946 which examined the death of 33 supporters as a result of overcrowding at Burnden Park in Bolton (McCardle, 2000), it was the Ibrox football stadium disaster in 1971 which intensified political interest in football (Johnes, 2004; O’Neill, 2005;

Walker, 2007). According to Walker (2007), Ibrox symbolized how many British football stadia had become dangerous places housing large numbers of supporters with the provision of minimal standards of spectator safety and comfort. Following a subsequent inquiry by Lord Wheatley into the lack of safety guidance ‘to both the management of football clubs and their technical advisors on how to alter or improve their grounds’ (Thompson, Tolloczko and Clarke 1998, p.50), a technical support group was formed which produced recommended guidelines published in the *Green Guide Safety at Football Grounds* (herein the *Green Guide*). And two years later, the UK government established a new framework of safety certification for stadia with larger capacities in the form of the 1975 *Safety of Sports Ground Act* (Thompson, Tolloczko and Clarke, 1998).

The growing concern over football hooliganism led the government to also commission three reports into crowd disorder during the mid to late twentieth century. The first of these, published by the director of the Birmingham research group Dr J.A Harrington in 1968, made two suggestions to improve crowd control. Firstly, by providing by better accommodation and improving ground facilities to a nationally approved standard, crowds would be easier to control, and outbreaks of hooliganism prevented (Taylor, 1971; James, 2013). Harrington also argued that clubs should themselves take more responsibility in controlling the behaviour of fans within their own stadiums and whilst travelling to and from games. According to Maguire (2011), this was characteristic of how the Football Association attempted to distance itself from crowd disorder occurring in and around British football grounds whilst at the same time supporting interventionist policies which gave the police greater crowd control capabilities and magistrates courts increased powers to impose tougher/more punitive sentences to more violent offenders. The *Harrington Report* paved the way for a more detailed examination of football related disorder and improved surveillance, control and punishment of hooliganism which was published in the second; the *Lang Report* in 1969 (Gardiner, Boyes and Naidoo, 2012;

James, 2013). Central to this was the discussion of CCTV as a surveillance tool to identify those suspected as hooligans and a more robust ticket pricing policy to be adopted by clubs to control sales and segregate opposing supporters. Together, they captured the way in which the hooligan moral panic as a social problem became an issue of law and order (James, 2013). And finally, the third; the *Popplewell Report*, was published after the British Home Office established an *Inquiry into Crowd Safety and Control and Soccer Grounds* in 1985 as a result of two tragedies which occurred on 11 May at Valley Parade in Bradford and St Andrews in Birmingham (Fletcher, 2015). After various media reports claimed the cause of the fire at Bradford, which resulted in the death of 57 supporters, to be a smoke bomb, emphasising the perceived connection between hooliganism and fire (King, 1998), Popplewell found that it revealed a negligent health and safety culture in English football and subsequently revised the *Green Guide* before introducing the *Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act* legislation in 1987. However, the response to a crush by a falling wall at Birmingham which led to the death of a young teenage boy, focused on repressive measures to further prevent hooliganism at matches in England, which included the merits of all-seated stadia, the introduction of a national membership scheme, and the installation of perimeter fencing between supporters and the pitch (Taylor, 1991). And according to King (1998), these measures echoed then UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's attempt to move the focus of attention from supporter safety to public order, in the form of the 1986 *Public Order Act*. King (1998) discusses this political transformation of English football as emerging from the 'strong state and crisis of 1985' whilst Brick (2007) historicises these events as being part of the 'legislative encroachment and juridification of football fandom'. For Webber (2017), these events were characteristic of other disasters during the late 1980s such as the Kings Cross London Underground Station in 1987 and the Herald of Free Enterprise ferry and Piper Alpha oil rig in the North Sea, which all revealed a lax and negligent attitude towards health and safety and a culture which prioritised profitability.

Eighteen days after the Bradford fire, a further disaster occurred during the UEFA European Cup final between Juventus and Liverpool at Heysel in Brussels, after a wall collapsed in section Z of the stadium as a result of a crush created by a group of Liverpool supporters charging towards the Juventus fans (King, 1998; Bebber, 2014; Cronin, 2017). Consequently, 39 Juventus supporters lost their lives and all English football clubs were banned from European competitions for five years by UEFA. According to Taylor (1987), Heysel characterised a changing conjuncture in the development of class relationships in Britain during the 1980s, whereby the bourgeois ethic of competitive market individualism promoted by the radical right and the lack of economic, cultural or political alternatives, alienated both the bourgeois worker and the mass of unemployed youth.

Four years later, as contextualised in chapter 1, the most significant stadium disaster in English football occurred on 15 April 1989 at Hillsborough, resulting in the deaths of 96 Liverpool supporters (Conn, 1997; King, 1998; Lee, 1998; Scraton, 2002; Williams, 2014). According to Taylor (1991, p.7), the legacy of Popplewell's perimeter fencing and the way in which it acted as a 'caged-in pen from which there was no means of escape at a predictable moment of crisis of mass spectator excitement and anxiety', was one of the critical determining causes of the disaster. Immediately after Hillsborough, the UK government set up an inquiry led by Lord Justice Taylor to investigate the causes of the disaster and two reports subsequently emerged. The first interim report published in August 1989 focused why Hillsborough happened and produced a series of interim recommendations which included 'limiting the number of spectators entering each self-contained terraced pen or area to the maximum capacity figure' (Interim Taylor Report, 1989, p.57). However, the final report published in January 1990 which expanded the post-Hillsborough vision of a 'better future for football', produced a series of more robust recommendations on the need for greater crowd control. Whilst Taylor rejected the Thatcher government's proposed ID membership scheme as a practical solution to football

supporter violence (Taylor, 1991), his final report went further than recommending maximum capacities for standing terraces and instead concluded that ‘designated football grounds under the 1975 Act should be required in due course to be converted to all-seating’;

There is no panacea which will achieve total safety and cure all problems of behaviour and crowd control. But I am satisfied that seating does more to achieve those objectives than any other single measure.

(Taylor Report 1990, p.12).

As King (1998, p.99) noted, ‘Taylor’s preference for seating stemmed from his belief that a seated crowd was more controllable’ and put together with improved accommodation, better facilities, and better training of police and stewards, these measures would according to Taylor (1990, p.75) provide the best chance of eliminating or minimising hooliganism. However, whilst the Taylor Report argued that seating offered a safer method of spectating than standing and that ‘spectators would become accustomed and educated to sitting’ (1990, p.14), it also acknowledged that the practice of standing itself at football was ‘not intrinsically unsafe’. Consequently for King (1998, p.99), the report must be read within the context of a desire to encourage the attendance of more ‘disciplined (respectable) families in place of violently disposed young males’ but in a way which also recognised Taylor’s own concern that some traditional supporters may be excluded as a result of the financial constraints imposed by free market capitalism. Whilst the Taylor report in many ways was underpinned by social democratic and Keynesian sentiments towards the universal provision of football and public provision of seating (King, 1998), it nonetheless became an important catalyst for the transformation of English football’s landscape during the 1990s (Webber, 2017). In 1990, the UK government enforced Taylor’s all-seater recommendation. Having passed the *Football Spectators Act* in 1989, a new body, the Football Licensing Authority (FLA), would operate a licensing system for (all-seated) football grounds used for designated matches and to monitor local authorities’ oversight of

spectator safety. According to Webber (2017) and Cloake and White (2014), however, whilst Taylor's interim report was critical of the police officers in charge at Hillsborough, the main thrust of the final report shifted responsibility towards Britain's decaying terraces. The opportunity was missed, therefore, to challenge the prevailing antipathy that existed then, and indeed continues to exist today, towards football fans amongst those responsible for enforcing law and order.

Throughout the course of the three *timescales* used in my research, many of the families of those who died at Hillsborough, together with wider Liverpool supporter networks with social and political capital, formed the *Hillsborough Family Support Group* which became the central network of a social movement for justice, seeking to expose the truth of institutional complacency and personal negligence on part of the South Yorkshire Police at Hillsborough (Scraton, 2009). For Scraton (2004, p.198), the significance of Hillsborough is not limited to its broader context and immediate circumstances but instead reveals the shortcomings, failings and manipulation of the state's systems of inquiry and investigation which created a sequences of injustices designed to protect powerful interests. After a series of high profile mobilisations and inquiries, the UK government commissioned a *Hillsborough Independent Panel* in 2009 to investigate the disaster and to oversee the disclosure of documents concerning Hillsborough and its aftermath. Three years later on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2012, the panel published their report and concluded that 'no Liverpool supporters were responsible in any way for the disaster' (p.14) and that the main cause was a 'lack of police control' which compromised crowd safety at 'every level'. And on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2016, new inquests into the deaths of the 96 revealed that they were unlawfully killed as a result of a catalogue of failings by police and the ambulance services (Conn, 2016). Consequently, the Crown Prosecution Service announced in June 2018 that it intended to prosecute a series of high-profile chief superintendents' responsible for policing Hillsborough for manslaughter (Conn, 2018).

The legacy of Hillsborough and the strong state not only became one of the core conjunctural arguments for the reform of football and its supporters (King, 1998) but according to Scraton (2013, p.26) illustrates ‘the capacity within state institutions to engage in discourses of deceit, denial and neutralisation that protect and exonerate those in positions of power’. It was, however, the negative reputation ascribed to football supporters which was exploited within popular discourse and thus the all-seating legislation became an important catalyst for extensive changes to the economic, cultural and political structure of English football and its supporters.

#### “SUPPORTERS NOT CUSTOMERS”: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ENGLISH FOOTBALL DURING THE 1990’S

The post-Heysel European ban, the Bradford Fire and the Hillsborough tragedy conspired to all but kill off football’s traditional post-war persona. Out of the ashes a new and more consumer and customer-orientated, all-seater version of the game would arise. The repackaged game proved to be more attractive to sponsors, television companies and private sectors.

Sugden (2002, p.42).

King (1998) identified three key developments which he argued became the organic origins of the new consumption of football post-Hillsborough during the 1990s. These were; the decline of football attendances from the 1960s, the increasing political and economic effects of sponsorship in professional football, and the influence of the ‘Big Five’ clubs; Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur, who commanded the highest attendance figures in the top division. In doing so, he historicised the collapse of the post-war consensus and Keynesian national economic framework during the 1970s as the catalyst for the advancement of a post-Fordist economy ‘based upon the restatement of Britain’s historical commitment to banking and the City’ (Webber, 2017, p.879). Central

to this was the promotion of neoliberalism as a free market ideology influenced by the Austrian and American economists Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, which became Thatcherism in the UK (Peck, 2010). According to Harvey (2005), the central tenant of neoliberalism proposes that human well-being is best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom within an institutional framework characterised by privatisation, free markets and free trade. During the mid to late twentieth century, English football suffered a decline in match attendances and was according to Taylor (1984) a sport in recession due to new alternative leisured pursuits offered by the affluence created under the post-war Keynesian settlement. This, according to King (1998), enabled the large city clubs to become increasingly financially autonomous of the lower division clubs. Consequently, they sought to reform football during the 1980s in a way which reflected these new political and economic realities and in doing so became more attractive to sponsors and television companies and their free market driven sensibilities.

In 1990, the Football League produced a report, titled *One Game, One Team, One Voice*, in the wake of the Hillsborough disaster and two years before the 1988 football television deal was due to expire. According to Conn (2000), the League foresaw possible breakaway attempts by the big clubs led by a younger breed of chairmen to create a new Super League, and in doing so negotiate a larger TV deal within a new deregulated climate (Cleland, 2015). As a result, it proposed the forming of an evenly represented twelve-man board to ensure commercial and television deals would be distributed fairly. However, the Football Association responded by producing its own document, *The Blueprint for the Future of Football* which supported a breakaway Premier League arguing that football should move upmarket to pursue more affluent middle-class consumers (FA, 1991, Conn, 2000). This proposal was accepted by the 'Big Five' clubs and became the basis for a new five-year television deal between BSkyB and the newly formed Premier League worth £304 million (Millward, 2011; Cleland, 2015). This deal saw 50 per cent of the television revenue



distributed equally but a further 25 per cent awarded on the final league position, and the remaining 25 per cent on the number of live television appearances (Szymanski, 2015). For King (1998), it was at this decisive moment English football embraced the post-Keynesian free market and came to be irretrievably embodied by neoliberalism and Thatcherism. Here, the entry of BSkyB was as symbolic as it was game-changing. The introduction of subscription fees ensured ideas of consumer choice and enterprise became central to the ritual consumption of football during the 1990s (King, 1998, Boyle and Haynes, 2004); opening up new markets to attract new supporters that did not previously follow football (Malcolm et al, 2000).

Packaged as a ‘Whole New Ball Game’ by BSkyB (hereafter Sky) media advertisements, the FA Premier League was launched in August 1992 (Millward, 2017) and represented a ‘reprogramming’ of the goals assigned to the network of interested parties that regulate English football’ (Hill et al. 2018, p.695). To achieve this, key players or ‘switchers’ (Castells, 2013) such as the former owner of BSkyB Rupert Murdoch helped link cultural, political, and financial networks by switching together Premier League, ‘Sky Sports’ broadcasting and Premier League clubs as marketing partners (Hill et al. 2018). Central to this, was the role of new club directors who according to King (1998) had emerged in English football during a period of commercial development and designed new methods of accumulation to enable the professional football club to operate as a capitalist enterprise producing new symbolic commodities (Hudson, 2001). Hill et al. (2018, p.695) discussed how these directors became key ‘programmers’ by building clubs as brands and asserting new practices of ‘customer care’ which transformed club ownership from a ‘philanthropic hobby’ (Conn, 1997) into an investment opportunity (King, 1998). This was achieved as a result of the relaxing of the maximum dividend otherwise known as FA *Rule 34* which sought to prevent clubs attracting unscrupulous owners or businessmen who could make money out of a club either via a salary or dividend. As a result of this change,

owners of football clubs could then derive profits either through operating profits or capital gains (Conn, 1997; Dubal, 2010; Cleland 2015), enabling them to become profit making companies as opposed to public utilities. Some directors developed new marketing and merchandise strategies which helped attract international capital and create a 'sign value' within an emerging cosmopolitan global economy (Cleland, 2015).

However, as Webber (2017) notes, this market imperative needed to be embedded within football more broadly and thus to attract new middle-class consumers it was deemed necessary to undertake substantial investment to provide a stock of football stadia more appropriate in size and quality (FA, 1991). To assist this, then Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer John Major announced a cut to the Football Pools betting tax by 2.5 per cent for a period of five years in the 1990 budget, on the condition that the resultant revenue was diverted towards the *Football Trust* for football ground improvements (Major, 1999). This political intervention according to Webber (2017) became an instrumental mechanism in transforming the economic, cultural and political landscape of English football in the twenty-first century, and together with the project of new club directors, encapsulated a free market hegemony as a framework to diversify the consumption of football. And whilst the concept of customer helped attract more women and families to the game, it also helped legitimise subsequent increases in admission prices and methods of disciplining the crowd through all-seated stadia (Hudson, 2001). This in turn facilitated increasingly subdued and dispassionate forms of spectating and less space for collective forms of expression and physicality associated with terrace culture (King, 1998; Crabbe and Brown, 2004).

Such all-seated stadia, according to Kennedy and Kennedy (2017, p.63) lack the authenticity of place and the sense of belonging and community which traditional stadiums offered supporters and thus 'encourage fans to adopt new forms of identity based on commercialism reinforced by prescribed codes of controlled stadium behaviour'. More critically, strategies such as the banning of standing in all-seated stadia and the use of

stewards to police this, is, as Kennedy and Kennedy (2017) argue, characteristic of a strategy to control supporters through disorientation. In some cases, football clubs have sought to socially engineer 'traditional' supporter culture by normalising crowd choreography, including the display of flags and banners and specialised singing sections (Penny and Redhead, 2009). This, in turn, has led to the fragmentation and atomisation of tight-knit supporter groups (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2017). Meanwhile, for Bale (2000, p.93) the new safer, sanitised and surveillance driven football stadiums which emerged from the Taylor Report produced a new generation of catering, banqueting and merchandising facilities, which made them ideal for alternative sporting and leisure entertainment including rugby, rock concerts and religious festivals. And in some cases, these stadia moved from urban to more suburban areas and characteristic of wider changes in the economic and cultural fabric of British social life. (Crabbe and Brown, 2004). However, whilst the introduction of new post-Taylor all-seated stadia facilitated the new directors' project of socially reconstructing the football crowd, it consequently encouraged a more restrained form of consumption, thereby acting as a Foucauldian disciplinary measure and governing rubric for the management of supporter behaviour (Williams, 2006; King, 1998).

This neoliberal *timescape* of English football during the 1990s was characterised by a post-industrial political economy. This, according to Kennedy and Kennedy (2017), embraced Thatcherism and neoliberalism in a way which permeated the ideological fabric and symbolic meanings attached to football as 'the people's game'. The success of the new consumption of football meant embracing values of the entrepreneurial enterprise culture enacted by Thatcherism (Lee, 1998). For this to take hold, however, the transposition of this new culture required a new, mutually constitutive relationship between clubs and their supporters (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2017). Consequently, King (1997, p.236) argued that the concept of the 'customer' was inadequate because fans themselves became an integral

part of the commodity which the new directors asked them to buy as customers. To achieve this, Hudson (2001) and Brown (1998) identified the importance of supporter loyalty within various commercialisation strategies adopted by clubs. These ranged from increasing replica team kit sales (including ‘retro’ and heritage shirts) to the expansion of physical and increasingly online club merchandise stores. Other schemes were also introduced, designed to monetise the loyalty of supporters. Here, financial bond schemes were launched which enabled supporters to invest in their clubs but crucially would enable the biggest of these clubs to float on the stock market and raise capital investment (Lee, 1998; Hoehn et al. 1999). And whilst these business strategies reflected the customer service discourse evident within other hospitality and leisurewear industries, including multiplex cinemas and multipurpose leisure venues (Pierpoint, 2000), they nonetheless according to Brown (1998), sought to exploit the loyalty of supporters and disembedded a number of the wealthiest clubs from the working class communities out of which they arose (Webber, 2017).

In conceptualising the political economy of football during the 1990s as characteristic of a wider neoliberal *timescape*, the literature reviewed identifies a series of complementary economic and political *vectors* which further empowered the market as the primary means of socio-economically transforming English football and supporters’ relations. According to Gillan (2018, p.8), such ‘economic and political *vectors* of the neoliberal *timescape* are relevant to social movements in the generation of grievances against which to move’. Thus by examining the relationship between post-Keynesian economics and the switching of cultural, political and financial networks to diversify the new consumption of football, the chapter turns to consider the ways in which the neoliberal *timescape* created feelings of social unrest and a growing sense of disenchantment amongst some traditional supporters (Rookwood and Hughson, 2017). In doing so, it pays attention

to how the agitation of a new wave of supporter protest movements themselves negotiate the new consumption of football and connect across multiple *timescales*.

## “FOOTBALL WITHOUT FANS IS NOTHING”: CONTEMPORARY FAN PROTESTS, MOBILISATIONS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Fans are highly critical of their clubs for being over-commercial. They tend to hark back to a time when it was football first and business a distant second. When, in their imaginations at least, the club and the community were one and the same thing. Of course, it was never quite like that .... There remain large cadres of supporters who feel alienated and disenfranchised by the increased dominance of those in business suits over those in tracksuits and choose to turn their backs on official schemes of any kind.

Sugden (2002, p.52).

In order to contextualise contemporary football supporter social movements, I begin by examining King's (1997) account of a group of Manchester United supporters' which he conceptualised as the 'lads' and their relationship to the new consumption of football during the early 1990s. King's work helps us to understand how the reading of fans' interaction with 'modern' football should take into account the potentially shared interests between both dominant and subordinate groups, which texture social relations in often complex ways. In reading off their own self-expression and identity, fans often face a paradox whereby they simultaneously resist and comply with the neoliberal *timescape* and consumption of football. This is important because King's work itself is situated within the first *timescale*, and thus connects with the terraced and post-terraced social world(s) of English football, specifically by showing how this reading of self-expression was an important mechanism to connect or unify different supporter networks and resources through informal and formal strategies of resistance. Central to this, according to Crabbe

and Brown (2004), was a search for authenticity in the wake of those legislative interventions which disrupted and actively replaced 'traditional' supporter relationships.

King's fieldwork throughout the course of the 1993 to 1994 season found that a particular masculine style of fandom characterised by drinking, singing, fighting, casual clothing and sense of ecstatic solidarity became increasingly restricted as a result of the demolition of the terraces and rising ticket prices. However, whilst some fans were excluded, King (1997) noted that a sense of solidarity, pride, and love of the team compelled many of the lads to still attend. And yet despite being critical of all-seated stadia and moves to market the game to a more affluent audience, they took great honour in the size and quality of their stadium and the additional revenue generated to finance better players. Crucially, this self-expression and a distinctive appeal to tradition as imagined by the lads, provided a resource by which free market hegemony could be combated and this served to reaffirm the lads' notions of themselves (King, 1997). To achieve this, King's research showed how the formation of the *Independent Manchester United Supporters Association* (IMUSA) as a response to a stadium announcement demanding standing supporters in the K stand at Old Trafford in 1995 remain seated, became a catalyst to connect different supporter networks and resources in ways which were informed by imaginary constructions of authenticity.

This connected King's work to the burgeoning culture of *New Football Writing* (NFW) and the growth of other ISAs which together developed a relational culture of contestation against various aspects of commercialism across the neoliberal *timescape*. And these supporter network's according to King (2003) consisted of a complex and diverse hierarchy of status groups which coalesced and unified at particular football clubs to develop relational fan cultures. Whilst these cultures do not embody specific 'traditional working class' values, they are in many cases concerned with the 'working class' consumption of the game across both local and national contexts.

*The Football Supporters Association (FSA) and Independent Supporter Associations (ISAs)*

The emergence of ISAs as club-based new social movements during the 1990s (King, 2003) must be historicised by paying attention to the particular types of negotiation between supporters at specific sites of communal interaction (Melucci, 1989). During the twentieth century, two very different national supporter organisations emerged which helped establish more localised independent fan movements in seeking closer involvement in the decision making process of football clubs (Russell, 1997; King, 2003; Brown, 2005, 2011; Doidge, 2015). The oldest fan organisation dating back to 1927 was the NFFSC which according to Brown (1998) comprised of supporter groups which were in some way conservatively tied to the official football club, as opposed to being particular campaigning organisations. In the wake of the Heysel stadium disaster in 1985, however, a small network of football supporters on Merseyside formed the national FSA. This, according to King (1998) and Cleland and Dixon (2014) expressed an outrage felt by many football fans concerning the authorities handling and organisation of the 1985 European Cup final and the broader treatment of supporters by the UK government, the police force and the British media. The FSA's primary focus centred upon the government's *Football Spectators Bill* and the proposed national ID card scheme alongside a campaigning culture against racism in football, and a better treatment of English supporters abroad through the establishment of fan embassies at international tournaments (Brown, 1998; Lee, 1998).

Unlike the NFFSC, the FSA was an individual supporter membership-based organisation built around regional branches and established policies at an annual conference (Brown, 1998). As King (2003, p.182) notes, however, despite initially being able to attract a large membership, it had by the mid-1990s become largely 'defunct as a political organisation' and, unlike the ISAs, was unable to mobilise fans in an increasingly deregulated environment where there were few national issues. The FSA was powerless to stop the imposition of all-seated stadia, the birth of the PL and BSkyB deal, the flotation of

some clubs on the stock exchange, and the first wave of ticket price increases (Brown, 2005). Despite this, it was able to articulate its views to an audience well beyond the declining constituency of its own members and maintained a credibility amongst supporters which the NFFSC lacked because it remained independent from clubs and the football authorities (King, 1998; Russell, 1997; Brown, 1998).

Together with the birth of ISAs, the FSA became a central part of a culture of the NFW as a style of fandom. This, according to King (1998), was informed by boyhood memories of a 'golden age' of football, and founded largely upon socially democratic principles. And these memories shaped fanzine writers' response to the neoliberal *timescape* of football during the late 1980s and 1990s. Central to this was the publication of print fanzines which were characterised by a culture of contestation through the ways in which they enabled a users' view and often a radical interpretation of popular cultural forms to be expressed by fans excluded from mainstream expressions about the new consumption of football (Jary et al. 1991). According to Millward (2008, p.300), 'fanzines sought to provide fans with a liberal voice and were partially created as a form of cultural resistance against the 1980s conflation of football with the racist-hooligan couplet'. And these were mainly produced by white males, aged 30 years or younger and educated beyond a compulsory educational standard with left wing or liberal political views (Jary et al. 1991, King, 1998). Supporting this, Giulianotti (1999, p.149) argued that the new middle classes gained a sizeable stake in the production, mediation and consumption of football culture, whereby the FSA, ISAs and fanzines tended to be filled with 'white-collar service workers from employment such as sales, middle management or further education'. Consequently, the social position of the producers and consumers of fanzines were characteristic of the broader social transformation of British society and the emergence of the private sector middle class and concomitant and economic peripheralisation of the public sector middle-



class, and thus many worked in those public institutions, which emerged or were strengthened under the Keynesian post-war consensus (King, 1998).

Nash's (2000, 2001) research into ISAs at Southampton (SISA), Newcastle (NISA), Sheffield United (BIFA) and Leicester (LCISA) revealed that many of these supporters, like those within the FSA, were committed to progressive politics and the right of all fans to attend matches, and in doing so sought to cooperate with opposition fans and opposed and disowned the violence which led to the regulation and reform of supporters. However, as Millward (2011) notes, the representation of the middle class in key positions within supporter organisations is not likely to be representative of the wider body of football supporters. Indeed, King (1998) suggests that fanzine writers' remembered interpretation of the atmosphere of the grounds in the late 1960s was also the formative experience for the 'lads' and their masculine self-expression. And this became a common experience which unified the 'lads' and fanzine writers through specific ISA networks to collectively reject the idea that 'supporters are simply customers'. However, whilst the FSA made considerable efforts to bring ISAs into the fold arguing that if fans acted together they would seize more control, ultimately the power structures of the neoliberal *timescape* of English football during the mid-1990s were according to Taylor (2007), left largely undisturbed.

Nonetheless, the emergence of the FSA, fanzines and ISAs to highlight collective fan issues around ticketing, policing, all-seated stadia and social exclusion played an important role in developing a culture of contestation to campaign for greater supporter democracy (Jary et al. 1991; Brown, 2002). What isn't clear from this research, is how diverse FSA, fanzine and ISA networks themselves interacted and unified around primary sites of consumption. King's (2003) research is important because he examined particular fragmented and diversified social networks themselves, including key personnel within IMUSA, INUSA and SISA. In doing so, he conceptualised ISAs as a species of new social

movements (NSMs) which arose out of the dense interactions and produced recognisable social groups of fans. This research was significant because it offered a rare attempt to theorise these supporter networks within ISAs and the culture of football fanzines using social movement theory (Melucci, 1988, 1989; Touraine, 1971, 1981, 1988). King (2003, p.180) argued that core members of these networks had shifted their political commitment from conventional workplace politics to an almost exclusive focus on football and expressed the new collective interests of the masculine fans in the face of transformations which threatened their solidarity. For Melucci (1989) and Touraine (1971), these new social movements in post-industrial society comprise of interactions in the area of lifestyle and consumption.

The important empirical research of Brown (2002), Brown and Walsh (1999), King (1998, 2003) and Nash (2000, 2001) is situated within the first *timescale* and characterises the FSA, fanzine and ISAs as having developed relational collective action. However, the specific micro-level networks, relations and interactions, and the mechanisms of that relational culture of cooperation and resistance, are under explored. This is a challenge I pick up in chapter 4. Brown's research as an activist scholar within FSA-fanzine-ISA relational networks, captured 'how formal and informal alliances of club based organisations, national associations and fanzines expressed a culture of dissent in football and argued that their ability to turn their sub-cultural capital into meaningful change would be crucial to the future of football in Britain' (2002, p.64). Indeed, as King (2003, p.189) would later suggest, 'new networks of fans were emerging across Europe which would likely be increasingly significant in the future'. One of the ways in which this might be achieved, according to Brown (2002), was through the strengthening of greater cooperation between fan organisations. However, there remains a dearth of research into the storied dimensions of collective action amongst different supporter networks connected across FSA-fanzine-ISA relational fields. This thesis addresses this gap by investigating the core

networks within the FSA as an organisation across the first *timescale*, and in doing so, analyses the mechanisms of those relationships and interactions which helped build relational collective action. To achieve this, the chapter turns to contextualise the ways in which these networks, relations and interactions must be situated within a neoliberal *timescape* which adopted a ‘Third Way’ vision for supporter participatory democracy towards the end of the first *timescale*.

### *Mobilising Supporters Directly through the Language of the ‘Third Way’*

The 1990s witnessed the emergence of a new political movement in Britain which sought to renew social democracy through values of mutualism and cooperation and in doing so resolve the contradiction inherent within neoliberalism’s encouragement of both economic individualism and social conservatism (Hutton, 1995; Giddens, 1998, 1999; Hargreaves and Christie, 1998; Kennedy and Kennedy, 2007). According to Anthony Giddens (1998), traditional social democracy had become too restrictive and paternalistic in the way it inhabited individual liberty and economic entrepreneurship, by over regulating the free market and stifling economic growth. Consequently, it encouraged a social democracy too dependent on the state which restricted the development of a more active citizenship (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2011). However, the economic dynamism of neoliberalism within the context of ‘growing social inequalities and social exclusion, would eventually set limits on the further development of a market economy’ (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2007, pg. 287). To overcome this, Giddens (1998) argued that a ‘Third Way’ including a ‘third’ or ‘voluntary sector’ which aimed to move beyond social democracy and neoliberalism, would offer a new synthesis of market and state, public and private, individual and collective and rights and responsibilities.

Throughout the course of this *timescale*, the neoliberal *timescape* of English football became characterised by a desire for football fans to have a greater stake or influence in the organisation and governance of the game (Brown, 1998). In 1995, whilst still in opposition to the Conservative government, the Labour Party's shadow Sports Minister, Tom Pendry, worked closely with the FSA and the FA to assess the impact of football's commercialisation and the treatment of supporters (Greenfield and Osborn, 2000). This led to the publication of a new political framework by the Labour Party titled *The Charter for Football* (Cunningham and Pendry, 1995), which proposed the forming of a *Football Task Force* (FTF) comprising of all key football organisations, including the FSA and NFFSC. According to Mellor (2009, p.16), the FTF reflected a desire to investigate whether the football industry during a period of seemingly 'unaccountable' deregulation had failed to meet its 'social obligations'. Upon winning the General Election in 1997, the New Labour government established the FTF and in doing so produced four reports. While these demonstrated what Brown (1999, p.63) called an 'admirable democratic concern for greater consultation with supporters', inevitably became characterised by organisational loyalties. Yet Brown's research is important because as a central node within the IMUSA and FSA networks, he played an active role on the FTF and thus offered an empirical insight into the unwillingness of the New Labour government to regulate the economic governance of English football (1999, 2006; Mellor, 2009). Consequently, Brown became a central figure within a *Coalition of Football Supporters* network (CoFS) who presented the head of the FTF, David Mellor, with a new fans charter arguing that the 'soul' of football had been destroyed by money hungry clubs. A new football audit commission was therefore required to monitor the social, cultural and financial impact of commercial decisions taken by football clubs (Brown, 2006).

According to Brown (1998), one of the problems fan networks like the *CoFS* faced was the charge of conservatism, and this was directed towards calls for a reintroduction

of terracing during the late 1990s. Whilst Brown's research documented supporters' strategic interactions with the state through the FTF, the specific networks, relations and interactions which helped build the *CoFS* and the campaign to reintroduce terracing in English football, again remain largely under explored. Chapter 4 addresses this research gap by investigating how, why and where the *CoFS* network emerged and the ways in which it connected supporters and the protests they formed, across FSA-football fanzine-ISA relational fields towards the end of the twentieth century.

Whilst the FTF ultimately illustrated the weakness of the Third Way in the way it became a 'vehicle for the New Labour government to appear to decentralise decision making whilst at the same time maintaining control over which decisions would be implemented' (Kennedy and Kennedy 2007, p.293), the calls for greater fan involvement in the regulation of the game demonstrated a commitment to the principle of 'refashioning football clubs as more genuinely participative and mutual organisations' (Martin, 2007, p.642). And at the Labour Party conference in 1999, then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Chris Smith, MP, announced the governments' intention to encourage supporters' groups to establish Supporters' Trusts led by *Supporters Direct* (SD), which would receive funding of £250,000 per year over a three year period (Martin, 2007; Kennedy and Kennedy, 2007; Malcolm, 2000). According to Hamil et al. (2001), SD became an opportunity to 'forge new relationships between supporters, their clubs and the local community and was underpinned by a desire to democratise supporters' relations with the game. The organic origins of the SD movement were characterised by a 'Third Way' discourse inherent within New Labour's desire to promote 'self-help' and 'social responsibility' with core values of 'mutualism' and 'community' (Mitchie, 1999). For Kennedy and Kennedy (2007), it is important to recognise that supporters' trusts developed within the wider context of Third Way politics which ultimately presented major obstacles to achieving greater supporter democracy. Central to this according to Martin (2007, p.648)

were the ways in which new mutualism facilitated a greater sense of alienation and disenfranchisement on part of some fans from the lower socioeconomic strata. As these Supporters' Trusts became more professionalised and spoke with the language of business, some board level fan representatives inevitably became co-opted into the business demands of football and diluted the independence of ISAs.

As SD emerged from the FTF, so too did the merging of the FSA and NFFSC into one national supporter organisation; the FSF. According to Brown (2005, 2011), whilst the FSA and *CoFS* had played a leading role on the FTF in attempting to persuade the government for an independent regulator, the existence of two national organisations representing different traditions, constrained their ability to speak collectively with one voice. And so, whilst SD continued to focus on supporter ownership and the governance of clubs, the FSF concentrated on a range of objectives which would improve the matchday access and experience of supporters in a way which SD could not (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2007). Consequently, whilst SD and the FSF complemented each other's objectives and had 'interlocking boards' and networks, the greater pull felt by supporters was to the FSF, evidenced by individual supporter membership and the affiliation of club-based associations and trusts (Brown, 2005; Kennedy and Kennedy, 2007). In terms of academic research concerning SD, scholars from the Birkbeck College in London including Sean Hamil, Jonathan Michie, Christine Oughton and Steven Warby examined the role SD played within the changing face of football business at the start of the new millennium. Since the early 2000s, however, there has been a lack of research into the networks and organisational culture of the FSF during this *timescale* and the ways in which these networks, relations and interactions coalesced around supporter issues at specific clubs and the game more broadly, and the supporter protests and campaigns which emerged. Tellingly, Brown himself became less involved with the FSF because he, through the IMUSA and later the *Manchester United Supporters Trust* (MUST), played an active role

in mobilising the protests against, firstly, the proposed BSkyB purchase of Manchester United in 1998, and then the takeover by the American businessman Malcolm Glazer in 2005 (Brown and Walsh, 1999; Brown, 2007, 2008; Millward and Poulton, 2014). This shift would appear to underline King's (1998) observation that ISAs, as opposed to the FSA, were more successful in mobilising fans who were ultimately united by years of close association and parochial club identities.

This chapter concludes by rethinking the neoliberal *timescape* of English football and the burgeoning empirical research into twenty-first century supporter protests and movements '*Against Modern Football*' which are situated in the final *timescale*, and connect fans in new online and urban spaces. In doing so, it demonstrates how some of the more recent case studies of football supporters' collective action are relational to previous literature examined during the 1990s political economy of football, and the legacy of the social, cultural and political reform and regulation of supporters. By exploring these cases, I argue that football supporter social movements *as* relational networks, move across multiple *timescales* and interact culturally, economically and politically. As a result, attention must be paid to the specific dynamics and mechanisms of these networks and their relations and interactions in a way which brings temporal sensitivity to the interplay between movements and their socio-political environments (Gillan, 2018).

#### *'Against Modern Football': Relational Sociology and Temporality*

Millward (2011, 2016, 2017) draws upon the work of Manuel Castells to show how an economic transnationalism, specifically as a form of globalisation which emerged during the application of free-market thinking from the late 1970s, underlies the multiple mobilities of people, information and images across the world of football and specifically the contemporary English Premier League as *the* global football league. Consequently, a

transnational network society emerged whereby the league and its clubs operate in various 'spaces of flows', comprising of multiple images, people and capital. In doing so, he updates the critical work of King (1998, 2003) by examining how the neoliberal *timescape* and new consumption of football became characterised by a transnational capitalist class, and with it emerged new sources of supporter social unrest at specific Premier League clubs, including Manchester United (Millward, 2011, Millward and Poulton, 2014) and Liverpool (Millward, 2011, 2012), and across national supporter organisations like the FSF (Millward, 2011, Hill et al. 2018, Numerato, 2018).

At Manchester United, relational supporter networks within IMUSA and united fanzines, which included Brown himself, developed various protests against Malcolm Glazer leading to creation of a new supporter owned football club; *FC United of Manchester* in 2005 (Brown and Walsh, 1999; Brown, 2007, 2008, Millward and Poulton, 2014). Whilst at Liverpool, an emerging wave of protests against the clubs' American owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett connected supporters across relational networks which included *Reclaim the Kop*, *Keep Flags Scouse* and later the *Spirit of Shankly* (Millward, 2011, 2012), evidencing the importance of imaginary constructions of authenticity and memory to supporter movements' collective identity. Millward's work found that, like the ISAs during the 1990s, leaders of contemporary fan protests and social movements were also likely to possess high levels of economic and cultural capital. This included individuals those who had previously been members of the FSA and worked on the FTF, alongside writers and producers of new forms of online fanzines and podcasts (Millward, 2008). In doing so, contemporary supporter protests came to embrace the internet as an accessible form of communicative media; an online public sphere from within which supporter collective action can be built (Castells, 2009). Millward (2008) conceptualises these new online spaces as e-zines which are characteristic of traditional



fanzines and their culture of contestation through the ways in which they facilitate mobilisations and serve to bolster fans' motives for collective action.

Millward's research into contemporary transnational networks and the social movements they form in the digital age has primarily focused on club specific cases which is characteristic of a wider body of burgeoning literature on the relationship between 'modern' football and supporter activism. As Hill et al. (2018) note, football fans' social networks are often divided by long established lines of club rivalry and isolation, and thus research has tended to focus on supporters' critical engagement with the neoliberal *timescape* of football through opposition to single clubs (Numerato, 2015). Numerous case studies include **Manchester United** (Brown, 2007, 2008; Dubal, 2010, Millward and Poulton, 2014), **Liverpool** (Millward, 2011, 2012; Williams, 2012), **Sport Club Corinthians Paulista** (Dubal, 2010), **Everton** (Kennedy, 2012), Atlético Bilbao (Groves, 2011), **A.S. Livorno** (Doidge, 2013) and **Sankt Pauli F.C.** (Daniel and Kassimeris, 2013; Totten, 2015). Additionally, some research has focused on activism within wider European contexts, including **England** (Webber, 2017, Hill et al. 2018), **Italy** (Testa, 2009; Numerato, 2015, Doidge, 2015), the **Czech Republic** (Numerato, 2018), **Germany** (Ziesche, 2015), **Spain** (O'Brien, 2015), **Croatia** (Tegoures, 2015, Hodges, 2018), **Poland** (Kossakowski, 2015), **Greece** (Zaimakis, 2016) and **Turkey** (Guney, 2015). What is clear from most of this research is a need to rethink neoliberalism by recognising the role of market driven policies in agitating supporter social unrest, but in a way which understands this 'friction' as creating protest cultures which are co-produced in networks and interactions (Dubal, 2010). This friction, according to Tsing (2005), is not always synonymous with resistance, but instead creates the condition for disenfranchised supporters to 'both gain control and influence over their resources as well as to compromise their position within global power structures' (Dubal, 2010, p.144). It is through this friction, according to Dubal (2010) that the neoliberal *timescape* continues to take form and

develop. However, the process of agitation itself is largely under explored within this literature bar the work of Millward and Poulton (2014) who draw on Blumer's theory of collective behaviour to address this gap within the context of FC United supporter networks, and the role of core agitators in helping develop group morale and a group ideology. Whilst this is a telling contribution to our understanding of how supporter social movements emerge, their account of agitation focuses on key mobilisations which took place in 2005 and thus do not analyse the micro-level networks, relations and interactions from which those mobilisations themselves emerged. To achieve this, research must pay attention to what Gillan (2018) argues are the spatial boundaries within which networks and their history and past lived experiences move.

Likewise, Numerato (2015) offers a rethinking of neoliberalism which echoes King's critique of 'the lads', by examining the ambiguity between the neoliberal production of supporter protest subcultures and those who use them as a vehicle to criticise the same neoliberal principles. In doing so, he considers how concepts like '*Against Modern Football*' increasingly become objects of reflexive discourse which deconstruct the neoliberal *timescape* in which club, national and transnational supporter networks are embedded. Numerato's contribution is to show how various supporter protests' as anti-neoliberal initiatives are understood as expressions of *reflexivity* with the potential to both enhance and limit social change, with the latter being a consequence of an over emphasis on technical aspects of protest and institutionalisation through the cooption of business like language. This critique is similar to that posed by Martin (2007) of *Supporter Trusts*' and how such language often resembles the grammar of neoliberal principles. However, his research does not consider the social-cultural origins of supporters involved in '*Against Modern Football*' protests nor does he examine the mechanisms of those networks seeking to transcend and change contemporary football culture. Similarly, Webber's (2017) application of Karl Polanyi's 'double-movement' to examine the counter-attack '*Against*

*Modern Football* in England, is more concerned with conceptualising the characteristics and style of that movement rather than exploring how it has mobilised as a social movement across time.

## RESEARCH GAPS

According to Garcia and Welford (2015), whilst there are examples of cross-club activism such as those campaigns led by the FSF and other movements, this has not been studied systematically. This is a challenge I pick up in this thesis and in doing so, my research fills those gaps identified above by offering a rich empirical analysis of the meanings given to the Safe Standing movement by supporter networks in a way which examines the socio-cultural origins of those networks involved across different *timescales*. In doing so, I critique Numerato's (2015) view of 'modern' football being characterised by "single issues" by investigating how Safe Standing relationally moves across multiple *timescales* which interact culturally, economically and politically. This offers a contribution to the burgeoning literature on 'modern' football and supporter activism by researching a longitudinal case which is not limited to a single club but instead comprises of multiple networks of networks of networks that make up the interactions of interactions of interactions of disparate supporters as social actors that are connected through differing strengths of ties (Cleland et al. 2018). This extends the contribution offered by Hill et al. (2018) who researched the *Stand Against Modern Football* (StandAMF) internet-based movement over a three year period and the fostering of alliances with mainstream media and political parties in order to spread its countervailing logics. Informed by Castells work on social movements and programming logics, Hill et al. (2018) argue that some supporter networks form rhizomatic coalitions in both online and urban spaces which challenge the corporate logics of 'modern' football, but in a way which appears to lack formal leadership

or a single collective identity. This research is important because it offers a rare analytical insight into the role of the FSF as one node within a wider network that *StandAMF* helped switch together. Subsequently, it poses critical questions regarding the relationship between more formal organisations like the FSF, which emerged from the FSA-ISA-fanzine culture of contestation during the second *timescale*, and horizontal spaces of social media which unite previously isolated supporter networks.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter examined key literature within the sociology of football to document the social, cultural and political conditions out of which the legislation to make all top level football grounds all-seated emerged and the subsequent conjunctural arguments for the reform and regulation of football and its supporters (King, 1998). In doing so, it showed how the deepening of commercial pressures and establishment of ‘free market arguments as the dominant interpretation which informed English football’s transformation’ (King, 1998, p.128) created feelings of social unrest and displacement amongst some ‘traditional’ supporters (King, 1998; Conn 1997; Lee, 1998). As a result, some supporter networks were agitated into developing a relational culture of contestation against various aspects of ‘modern’ football which were both compliant with and resistant towards the neoliberal *timescape* in which they were situated (King, 1998, 2003; Nash, 2000; Millward, 2011). This emergence of a new wave of supporter social movements sought to break down the power of the state in order to achieve more effective involvement and representation in the running of clubs and the game more broadly. These actions and demands of supporters and their relationship to broader social, cultural and political changes must be situated within the wider context of contemporary Britain and social transformations (King, 1998).

The empirical work identified in this chapter offers a detailed analysis of how fan identities are constructed in a way which is informed by the realities of social interaction with the neoliberal *timescape* of English football, and the development of ‘Third Way’ politics. This offers a hermeneutic framework through which contemporary supporters’ protests can be analysed. To achieve this, I argued that social movement research should seek to identify connections between groups or networks longitudinally across multiple *timescales* in order to understand how they build relational collective action. This informs my research of Safe Standing as a networked social movement which comprises of multiple networks and connections which are switched together across *timescales* and negotiate with wider discourses like ‘*Supporters Not Customers*’, ‘*Football Without Fans Is Nothing*’, and ‘*Against Modern Football*’, which themselves contain their own economic, cultural and political *vectors*, which give the neoliberal *timescape* its meaning.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

Relational methodologies are transactional or relational precisely because they involve a “shift away from thinking about a concept as a singular categorical expression to regarding concepts as embedded in complex relational networks that are both intersubjective and public ... that is concepts cannot be defined on their own as single ontological entities; rather, the meaning of one concept can be deciphered only in terms of its ‘place’ in relation to other concepts in its web.

Somers (1995, p.136)

#### INTRODUCTION

In my research, empirical qualitative data collected from a wide range of archived materials, personal interviews and participant observation (both online and offline) has been drawn upon, to investigate the stories told by supporters within the cultural relational networks of Safe Standing across three *timescales* from 1989-2019. I specifically focus upon the dynamics of networks, relations and interactions to answer the research question and aims. Each *timescale* has been analysed qualitatively in a way which sees some compatibility between cultural relational sociology and the interpretivist (interactionist) sociology of hermeneutics. To achieve this, I use aspects of Crossley’s relational framework which recognises the importance of networks and interactions but do not employ the quantitative social network analysis (SNA) often used in relational sociological research (White et al. 1976; Burt, 1978; Scott, 2000; Borgatti et al. 2002). SNA uses mathematics and graph theory to measure and systematically describe and analyse relational structures. Rather, like Edwards (2014), Crossley and Edwards (2016), Fuhse and Mutzel (2011) and Bellotti et al. (2015) I recognise the importance of qualitatively analysing the stories, identities and meanings of networks but extend this beyond

incorporating archival qualitative analysis into a mixed quantitative/qualitative methodological design, and instead focus more on empirical in-depth interviews (with *individual* networked actors). I follow King's relational position in using these as a way into researching a *lifeworld* and to complement the archived materials and observations which help interpret what those interviewees are saying (not as *individuals*) but as members of *networked communities*. As King (2004, p.133) notes, 'members or actors within networks must recognise what the collective ends are, and no sociological explanation can ignore these shared understandings towards which actors orientate themselves'. In this chapter, the methodological and philosophical issues which emerged in the research design, data collection and analysis are presented. I begin with the above quote from Somers (1995) to emphasise that this research design starts from the point of treating Safe Standing not as a single ontological entity but rather relational network (with histories of interactions and mobilisations) which helps understand the its various cycles of contention or 'fuzzy temporalities' (Gillan, 2018). To achieve this, I explore relational methodologies. This chapter therefore begins by recognising the challenge of seeking to overcome what Crossley (2015) refers to as the 'epistemological obstacle', and the 'problem of structure and agency within a dualist ontology of social reality' (King, 2004). In doing so, I adopt a social relational ontological position which moves beyond structure and agency as conceptualised by many contemporary sociologists. Here I recognise that while individuals do exist they are nevertheless embedded in social networks and a 'continuity of meaning'.

## METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

### *Towards a social relational ontology*

Society does not consist of structure and agency but the social relations between human beings. Life is not the struggle of the individual against structure, nor the reproduction of the structure by the agency but an eternal round of interactions through which social relations between humans are made, transformed and destroyed. Institutions involve groups of humans in social relations coordinated in special ways with access to certain resources.

King (2012 [2004], p. 17)

King (2004) argues that much late twentieth and early twenty first century sociology is characterised by a dualist ontology, conceptualised as ‘structure vs. agency’; that being the cold institutions of modern society vs. the creative individual which favours abstraction over empirical understandings of the complex interplay of human social life. These contemporary social theories range from realist and critical realist thinking to postmodernism, which are all, in various ways according to King (2004, p.4), marked by the same fault. That being, ‘human social relations have been effaced by a dualistic picture in which structure confronts the individual, and that the infinite richness of shared human life is reduced to a mechanical model; structure imposes upon the agency, the agent reproduces structure’. For King then, ‘society is nothing but human social relations and consists precisely of the complex web of social relations between people’ (2004, p.13). The challenge for contemporary sociologists is to avoid this philosophical dualism and the abstract theorising and instead focus on recognising the reality of modern society as consisting of complex webs (networks) of social relations between humans.

To achieve this, King (2004, p.18) calls for a social ontology which understands that ‘humans are never isolated nor are they confronted by an objective structure; they exist in social relations with other humans’ and that sociologists should look to investigate the



shared meanings which are a product of humans interacting and focus on how these relations ‘come into being and are transformed by the humans engaged in them’. King’s work is read as a synthesis of Durkheimian and Interactionist (Goffman) sociology which argues that individual agency is a mutual product of interaction but that this agency cannot be understood in individualist terms. Adopting King’s perspective, Cleland et al (2018) argue that it makes no sense then to study individuals (in this case football fans) either in isolation nor (what might be termed) structures (for example the FSA, ISAs and the FSF) without the people who have built or maintained (or resisted) those structures. King is particularly critical of the Bhaskar-inspired critical realism of Margaret Archer (1995), which claims certain elements of the self are prior to and separate from society. Developing King’s critique here, as I suggested right at the beginning of this thesis, I argue that football fans never contribute to their social relationships as ‘autonomous individuals’. Moreover, I argue that King’s social ontology is in some ways similar to Crossley’s (2011) work on social worlds and his critique of the structure/agency dichotomy. Whilst Crossley’s cultural relational sociology more explicitly rejects the individualism/holism dichotomy, it does raise issues regarding agency (whereby ‘holism precludes any role for individual or collective agency and individualism seeks both to rescue it and make it foundational’ (2011, p.125). Subsequently, whilst Crossley (2011) makes a distinction between the two in terms of ‘holism and individualism’ being mutually exclusive and ‘structure and agency’ necessarily presupposing one another, I suggest that whether we take King’s critique of structure and agency or Crossley’s position of interdependency between the two, we ultimately both move beyond dualism and overcome an epistemological obstacle by conceptualising what are often termed ‘structures’ as reducible to networks or worlds of social relations in particular locations, and that these complex networks mutually influence each other as discussed in chapter 1. These networks of social relations flow dynamically

across different *timescales* as humans within them form new relationships and affirm old ones with each other.

It was thus important to avoid proposing a methodological individualism which saw fan actors themselves represent social reality through their own subjectivity. Instead, I saw them as comprising of mutually sustaining social relations which constitute what these institutions *are* and what they *do*. As King (2004) notes, social relations cannot be comprehended without taking into account the common understandings on the basis of which humans interact with each other. I argue this is particularly important for social movement research and thus my research design looked to discover the shared meanings of Safe Standing and the ways in which fans came to mutually define/negotiate (the conflict, tactics, choices, strategies) as movement *vectors*. Structure is therefore reduced to networks each involving active social relations between fans, journalists, MP's, members of the SGSA, FA, PL, clubs, local council, police/safety experts etc. King would suggest that these institutions and groups are real but that their relations are never independent of the understandings which people have of them.

#### *Theoretically-informed empirical research*

In his investigation into the identifications and stories told by football supporters about Europe, Millward (2009) considered the challenges of researching collective identities. He drew upon Melucci (1996) to recognise that collective identities are 'notoriously difficult to research because they are not a "thing" but a process of construction, through active social relationships' (1995, p.58). As such, researchers must seek to capture the culture which emerges in interaction (Johnson, 1995). I adopt Millward's (2009) position here by recognising that before investigating a network, a researcher must first believe that an 'abstract culture' of that network exists. Having been familiar with the sociology of football

literature as discussed in chapter 2, I recognised the various criticisms of many football sociologists, particularly what King (1998) referred to as ‘false populism’. For King, many contemporary sociological analysis’ of football fan groups is often characterised by those sociologists (as fans) importing their own reading and views of the game onto the subject of investigation. I do acknowledge that upon entering the story of Safe Standing in 2010, I did, to an extent, need to rely upon some previous football fan literature which documented the neoliberal *timescape* and new consumption of English football (King, 1998) and the emerging culture of contestation led by the FSA, football fanzines and ISAs (Brown, 1998). This formed an abstract culture of the particular fan networks and interactions across those spaces which I considered as having a relationship to all-seated stadia. This body of work theoretically informed my empirical research by considering the ways in which potential diverse groups and networks unify at particular moments to develop relational fan cultures in which standing at football is about both the politicisation of football and the lifestyle consumption of contemporary fandom. I therefore use Crossley’s cultural relational sociology and King’s work on football fans to adopt a prior research driven approach which is neither wholly inductive nor deductive (Millward, 2009). In doing so the aim was to develop a methodology which intertwines culture (meaning), ties (structure), identity (agency) and control (social constraint), in a way which overcomes the problems associated with a dualist ontology. I elaborate on how this was achieved when outlining the research design, data collection and analysis.

#### *Why this case study?*

Yin (1984, p.23) defines a case study as ‘an empirical enquiry which investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence

are used'. He subsequently categorises case studies into the following; exploratory, descriptive and explanatory, with the latter facilitating a deeper level understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This in-depth examination of a particular place or practice can according to Millward (2009) be 'understood in relation to a particular social context'. With this, I reinforce that the work of King (1998; 2003), and Nash (2000) theoretically inform my empirical research and the particular social, cultural and political contexts out of which the core FSA, ISAs and FSF networks emerged to build relational collective action. However, Winegardner (2001) suggests that by concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity, the aim is to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon, and that this often entails a multi-method approach whereby qualitative data is collected via interviews, observation and analysing documents. My case study is thus characterised as both exploratory and explanatory. I recognise, however, Gillan's (2018) critique of social movement scholarship as often proceeding in a case-orientated fashion which contains an analytical boundary drawing which itself is loaded with political implication. To address this criticism, I argue that cases themselves are relational and must be studied with a temporal sensitivity which investigate network and interaction histories which give a movement like Safe Standing its cultural meaning.

Millward (2009) argues that case study findings can both be applied to similar contexts providing they are 'typical' (although it is difficult whether any case study can be characterised as typical of another). Therefore, whilst King's (1998; 2003) case study research on the 'lads' and ISA supporter networks, for example, cannot be generalised to every supporter group, they do help us understand the wider neoliberal *timescape* of English football because their occurring *processes* may be applicable in other cases. The results of my research may thus inform other scholarship on networked football supporter movements. And thus I extend the work of King (2003) in particular by looking at how the FSA and FSF were/are important to help connect various ISA networks, supporter groups

and trusts to build relational collective action and durable networks which characterise Safe Standing as movement across both local and national contexts.

### *Approaches to data collection*

Diani (2003) stresses the importance of organising data to produce a diachronic analysis of movements as networks in a way which avoids assuming exactly the same meaning for events at different points in time. To achieve this, my research maps the flows of core activists networked to the FSA, ISAs and FSF across 1989-2019. And because my research begins in 2013, some of data collected captures a social movement in real time during the third *timescale*. One of the main tools for researching social movements *as* networks is SNA. This method conceives a social structure as ‘a set of nodes that are hierarchically related according to the control of, and access to, embedded resources in their positions, which are entrusted to occupants (that is, actors) acting upon structural constraints and opportunities’ (Cinalli 2004, p.6). SNA emerged as a ‘set of methods for the analysis of social structures, geared towards an investigation of the relational aspects of these structures’ (Scott, 2000). Indeed much of Crossley’s work on movements as a key theoretical influence of my research, incorporates SNA to investigate particular mechanisms and patterns of network connections. To achieve this, SNA uses computer software tools such as UCINET (Borgatti et al. 2002) to create network maps (sociograms) which both visualise and analyse network properties using various measures such as ‘density’, ‘leadership roles’ and ‘blockmodelling’ (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Scott 2000) . It seemed perfectly reasonable to consider using this method to help organise and visualise the network data collected, however upon installing UCINET on my personal computer and engaging with a few basic tools with some small pieces of preliminary data,

it became clear that the quantitative aspect of SNA was designed to predominantly focus on the structural properties of networks (both as individual *ego* and whole networks).

Whilst I accepted that understanding these network patterns was an important contribution to relational sociology, I sought to avoid producing a structural analysis and instead examine the qualitative understandings of the meanings and contents of these ties or connections between actors. Moreover, I became unconvinced that mapping out an entire ‘whole’ network was either practical or necessary, nor did I believe this itself formed the rich analysis of those networks. I did however recognise the conceptualisation of SNA as not only quantitative but also qualitative and considered the work of Bellotti (2015; 2016) Crossley and Edwards (2016), Edwards (2010; 2014), Fuhse (2015), Fuhse and Mutzel (2011) to examine how qualitative SNA had been used to compliment quantitative analysis in a mixed method approach which inform each other (Edwards, 2010). As Fuhse and Mutzel (2011) note, qualitative research techniques including different types of interviews, conversation analysis, document analysis, and participant observation all provide a major route to these processual and cultural aspects of networks, thus aiming primarily for an “understanding” of the meaning embodied in them.

And so, the qualitative aspects of SNA led me to consider collecting data whereby networks would be investigated as ‘narratives’ which I believed would bring together the strongest aspects of cultural relational sociology and interactionist (hermeneutic) thinking. As Crossley et al (2015) note, narrative accounts of networks from the actor’s point of view can be useful to the extent that they enable us to explore in analysis the various ways in which ties are categories and defined by actors. It is through spoken and written narratives that actors actively construct the sense of who they are and how they are related to others (McLean, 1998; White 2008; Yeung, 2005). Furthermore, the narrative description of ties as relationship stories are according to Crossley et al (2015, p.114), not just revealing of those ties, but are constitutive of them. Where I move beyond the work of Edwards (2010,

2014) and Bellotti (2015; 2016) is to avoid focusing on ties as predominantly conceptualised as 'human'. Whilst I wanted to understand 'who knows who' and how and why those ties may be important to identifying those shared understandings of Safe Standing, I also sought to capture ties to particular places, events and discourses within the movement's socio-political environment across multiple *timescales*.

It was also evident that Crossley and Edwards' qualitative research on punk and the British suffragette movement relied heavily on both archival and other secondary sources. Whilst my research into the FSA during the 1980s meant that I would also draw on archived materials, my research during the third *timescale* in real time offered an opportunity to obtain access to primary sources unavailable to more historical SNA research. And so it made sense to develop a data collection strategy which would incorporate archived materials and primary qualitative research at various stages. This included network data such as the names of core activists identified in various fanzines, newsletters, published work and media sources, and from various interviews which focused on activists' social networks.

Crossley (2011, p.21) offers caution in using qualitative interview-based research which 'abstracts actors from their context and elicits reflective accounts of their experiences'. I therefore followed King's (2003) approach which used interviews as a way into researching a *lifeworld* which complemented archived research in order to understand what those interviewees are saying (*not as individuals*) but as members of *networked communities*. In doing so, I captured those shared meanings of identity, roles adopted, recruitment, communication conventions, and various tactics adopted. In other words, qualitative research was useful for reconstructing the processes and interactions that were involved in forming networks from one state to another across multiple *timescales* (Crossley and Edwards, 2016). The chapter turns to document how I approached qualitative

data collection, one which adopted a relaxed position on the methods used providing they captured the connections between supporters (Crossley and Edwards, 2016).

As I documented in chapter 1, upon entering the story of Safe Standing in 2010, I identified not only the political climate and appetite for change but role of the FSF in coordinating the campaign. I quickly realised that I would have to begin by investigating the core FSF network central to the movement during the third *timescale*. To achieve this, I began with a thorough analysis of the FSF's website and various other online publications, including reports, published minutes from national conferences, online blogs and the FSF's Twitter profile. However, I, nor anyone else within my personal and academic social network were members of the FSF, and I initially felt an *outsider*. Moreover, whilst I was a current season ticket holder of Manchester City, I had no experience of any supporter protest or social movement. This posed epistemological questions regarding how culturally alike I had to be to research participants to understand their networks, relations and interactions (Millward, 2009).

### *Epistemological challenges*

King argues that ethnographic research should produce a detailed analysis of the 'construction of identities and the way in which those constructions inform and are informed by the reality of social interaction' (2002, p.7). However, many football sociologists uncritically adopt the views fans themselves and interpret this socially specific and gender-specific political position in a populist fashion. To avoid imposing the sociologists own imagined relations with football, King drew on the negative dialectics of Adorno (1990) to suggest one must first examine the inadequacy of what one thinks. Applying this to my research, I recognised that upon entering the story of Safe Standing in 2010, as both a football fan and postgraduate researcher, I asked myself '*what* did I think



about this issue' and 'why did I think it'. In the first instance, Safe Standing represented an issue as opposed to a movement. My biography is embedded within the neoliberal *timescape* of English football in that I have experienced lunchtime kick-offs, increasing ticket prices, problems of club ownership, the experience of watching football on standing terraces, and the culture of persistent standing in all-seated areas. In tackling any curious bias head-on I acknowledged that as adult in my late thirties, I preferred the experience of standing at matches and felt it created a better atmosphere inside the stadium. In this sense, it was difficult to deny speaking from a standpoint and the inevitability of my views being critically inadequate. Furthermore, I also recognised that as a white male, I was inescapable from the power relations inherent within both those imagined notions of 'authentic' 'traditional' fandom, and the charge that mainly white male sociologists romanticise the hegemonic attitudes of generally white, male fans (King 2002). However, whilst recognising these challenges, I sought to avoid the 'most obtuse error of unselfconsciousness' by approaching the research in a way which would not uncritically adopt and reify the views of those both supportive of and involved in the Safe Standing network(s).

To achieve this, I considered three interpretivist epistemological positions as discussed by Delanty (2005) and Jenkins (2002) in order to separate first Safe Standing as an issue and campaign. In doing so, I rejected taking a radical epistemological standpoint, which proposed the only way to understand Safe Standing as a networked movement was to be a fully integrated member of that network, even if I broadly supported the issue. This position argues that the meanings and practices of being active within the network are particular to a knowing which only someone else involved in that capacity can understand (Millward, 2009). However, whilst I reject this approach, I do argue that having intersubjective knowledge and experience of the neoliberal *timescape* of English football does strengthen the ability to understand the sentiment behind almost all of the gathered

data – albeit with a few exceptions (Millward 2009). In my case, I had read football fanzines, had engaged with, and simply stood next to other Manchester City supporters who were writers of fanzines and members of City supporter groups and the FSF. I also disagreed with the position held by postmodernists who whilst seeking to appreciate the complexity of social relations shaped by multiple and overlapping identities (Delanty, 2005), reject all attempts to ‘ground knowledge in a single standpoint’ (Millward, 2009). This position argues that objective knowledge is not possible because I would *only* see the world from the perspective of those involved in Safe Standing across various points in time. Instead, I adopt a more reflexive standpoint which recognises the separation of Safe Standing as *the* subject, and networked football fan movements as *an* approach. In doing so, I continually questioned my own role in the research process and extend this to the epistemological level ‘in terms of a situated knowledge’ that seeks to be ‘both objective and critical’ (Delanty 2005, p.125).

Consequently, I adopted a qualitative research strategy which allowed me to investigate Safe Standing through the stories told by supporters networked across multiple *timescales*. Having rejected quantitative SNA, it made sense to consider adopting King’s ethnographic approach. However, since this is, in part a social history, it was impossible to go back in time and personally observe the networks, relations and interactions from 1989-2009. And so I considered whether it were possible to adopt a similar fieldwork strategy which would allow me to more fully immerse myself both in the organisational field of the FSF and the core Safe Standing network from 2013 onwards. To achieve this, I would need to ‘take part in the social movement’ (Balsiger and Lambelet 2014) by becoming a member of the FSF and core Safe Standing network during the third *timescale*, and thus obtain a ‘thick description of social reality’ by acquiring a deep knowledge of the network community (Geertz, 1973). As I began to develop data collection strategy, I believed this would allow me to move beyond ‘inquiring’ and ‘examining’ through archived materials

and qualitative interviews, to a more ‘experiential’ phase of research and analysis (Balsiger and Lambelet, (2014). However, whilst I believed joining the FSF would in itself be relatively easy, I knew that gaining access to the core Safe Standing network would be more difficult. I also realised that even if I managed to successfully achieve this, the time and financial resources required for full immersion in the field would not be available. To overcome this, as I shall now demonstrate, I therefore sought to develop a data collection strategy which explored various types of documentary research; one which evolved in such a way so as to centralise the importance of personal interviews and life histories (Blee, 2013; della Porta 2014).

#### DATA COLLECTION

##### *Connecting with members of the core network and identifying appropriate documentary sources*

My learning of the Safe Standing movement in 2010 took place during the first year of my academic career. After graduating with an MA in Sport, Culture and Society from the University of Brighton in 2007, I began looking for part-time research assistant and lecturing roles. In 2009, I was offered the opportunity to work as an associate lecturer in Sport Sociology at Edgehill University which gave me the platform to begin mapping out my research career. And in doing so, I wrote and published an academic blog which discussed the aim of the Safe Standing movement and the recent political interest as characterised by Don Foster’s bill. One year later in September 2011, I was offered a full-time position at Solent University, Southampton, which provided the platform to think more seriously about forming a PhD research proposal. And whilst it took some time to develop, I registered as a part-time PhD student in September 2013.

I begin with this short research biography to note that whilst my research evolved significantly a couple of years later, my entering the story of Safe Standing in 2010 helped shape two key decisions which proved to be critically important for the collection of data. Firstly, my early online newspaper research into Safe Standing had identified the name of an FSF caseworker Amanda Jacks with whom I would make initial contact with via email. Whilst I did not speak to Amanda in person until some years later, it communicated a research interest in the movement and a willingness to learn more about the FSF as a national supporter organisation. This was important because without realising, I had made contact with a member of the core Safe Standing network and would become a useful reference point for future correspondence with others. Secondly, in identifying Amanda, I came across the name of another FSF member and fellow West Ham United season ticket holder, Peter Caton, who in 2012 published a book based on his own involvement with Safe Standing. And because I did not know Amanda or Peter and encountered the book in finished format, the research began by collecting data from documentary sources. Caton's book identified three standing campaigns in English football from 1999-2012; *Standing Areas for Eastlands (SAFE)*, *Stand up Sit Down (SUSD)* and *Safe Standing*. Moreover, Caton himself with Amanda Jacks had formally led the *SUSD* campaign before it merged with *Safe Standing* in 2009 and his book identified the names of core networked activists within and around the FSF. And so I began to construct a research diary which documented those initial names and considered ways of making contact with them. I return to this later when documenting the data collection across the earlier *timescales*.

It made sense to begin with the most recent high-profile Safe Standing campaign and work backwards. To do so, I visited the FSF website to further identify key names of those elected to its national council, board and various staffing roles. Whilst I realised the core names would have changed at various points during the course of the second and third *timescale*, this nonetheless represented a relevant starting point to work from. I then decided

to formally sign up to become a member of the organisation to ensure I kept up to date with various developments and promotions via email. And this enabled me to present myself as an academic researcher, football season ticket holder and member of the FSF, which I felt would make my profile more credible when contacting those involved. However, the most crucial decision made during early 2014 was to develop a public online profile via the social media platform Twitter. Bowman and Cranmer (2014) discuss the increasing importance of online social media spaces for sports fan consumption. They particularly recognise how many sports fans have moved beyond following their specific club to individual athletes themselves. However, whilst there is a plethora of research into sports digital cultures and the analysis of new online spaces and places of consumption, there is a dearth of football fan research into the relationship between social media and supporter led campaigns. Moreover, whilst some broader social movement scholars have examined the use of Twitter to mobilise protest action (Theocharis et al. 2014), the use of social media itself as a data source or site for movement participant recruitment is still largely under researched and under theorised. I return to this discussion later, however note here that the decision to create a PhD Safe Standing Twitter profile could be best understood as a form of digital research in a 'messy web' (Postill and Pink, 2012).

The Twitter profile *@PhDSafeStanding* had three initial aims. Firstly, it formalised my own academic interest in the campaign in a way which seemed more credible than other fan accounts relating to Safe Standing. Secondly, whilst I expected not everyone involved would have a Twitter profile, it nonetheless allowed me to search for and connect with those directly who did. There are two key ways to connect; to follow and/or to be followed. I believed those with a key interest in Safe Standing, or themselves a core member of the FSF network, would likely follow me back and in doing so communicate my interest to others within the network. In doing so, it allowed me to connect directly with them in private via a personal message feature. Thirdly, it made me 'active' because I became

immersed in real time developments and thus in a position to observe interactions in the form of retweets and public conversations between people. At this stage of the research, the observations, known as “lurking”, were relatively simple in that they enabled me to ‘familiarise oneself with the phenomenon and to facilitate entry into the field’ (Mosca, 2014, p.410). To ensure the privacy of people under study was safeguarded, I recorded notes in my research diary which merely documented events and themes but not the personalised tweets of others. I return later to document how these initial observations and spending a period of years ‘doing qualitative research online’ facilitated an even more active presence and the building of relationships with other Twitter users.

In early March 2014, my Twitter connections mattered. I began following the FSF and SD before searching for all those named on the FSF website as currently elected to the national council, board and staff positions. I was able to connect with most but not all. Moreover, I could only be certain I had connected with the right person subject to identifying who they themselves were following. Generally, it was relatively straight forward based on them following the FSF, each other, and football specific Twitter accounts. I then moved to search for other profiles with the words Safe Standing to identify whether anyone else were publicly researching the FSF campaign, or actively campaigning themselves at their particular club. This search produced one critically important result; Jon Darch via his Twitter profile, *Safe Standing Roadshow*. It was immediately clear that Jon had a credible Twitter following of over three thousand and shared a link to his roadshow website within his short biography. However, Jon was not himself named on the FSF website and thus I wanted to know his network and connection to the campaign and issue.

Finally, I returned to the two names I began my research with, Amanda Jacks and Peter Caton. Fortunately, both were Twitter users and easy to identify. They also had a credible following. I hoped Amanda might remember my name from our initial email correspondence and that Peter having published the sole book on Safe Standing, would be

interested to learn of my academic research. However, as I began to identify people, I decided not to initially contact everyone for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to establish my own online presence first via observations and interactions. To do so, I would often retweet any particular newspaper article which sought to generally discuss fan-based politics and issues. Secondly, I wanted to begin my research with a sharp focus on possible leaders or core members of the network, even though I had no idea how large the network itself would spread. This approach was successful when Peter Caton upon following my profile sent me a direct personal message noting his interest to learn of my work. This connection on the 3 March 2014 was significant in that it enabled direct communication with someone who had authoritative knowledge and access to the core Safe Standing network. A few messages later, I obtained Caton's personal email address which enabled me to introduce myself in more detail and intention to investigate how Safe Standing had evolved from previous campaigns, in order to analyse whether the various protests he alluded to in his book, were constitutive of a relational social movement. Caton advised I also contact three others; Amanda Jacks (again) whom he knew very well from working with her on the *SUSD* campaign, the FSF Safe Standing coordinator Peter Daykin, and finally Jon Darch whom I had already connected with via Twitter. Many connections later, I was in a position to email Peter Daykin directly in April 2014. It is important to state here, that initial emails sent to those names identified stated the purpose of the academic research, but also my own biography as a football supporter and season ticket holder. Upon exchanging a few emails, Peter encouraged me to attend the annual FSF Supporter Summit at Wembley in the summer of 2014. Whilst future events of this nature would eventually become part of my observation analysis, I was on that occasion unable to attend, however the invitation characterised the rapport which Peter and I quickly built up. Furthermore, I had not heard of the Supporter summit before and it was clear this would offer a unique opportunity to know more about the FSF and those involved in football activism. When learning that

Daykin was a Sunderland AFC supporter (and former editor of two fanzines; *A Love Supreme* and *Sex and Chocolate*) aged approximately 40 years of age, I considered whether he'd recognise the name of my uncle who was a former professional footballer for Sunderland during the early 1980s. Confirming he had of course strengthened our connection and seemed to affirm my credibility that I, in some way, belonged to the social world of football. Here, the core coordinator or 'leader' of the FSF Safe Standing network, and I (a PhD student researching it), formed a relationship which became stronger throughout the life of my PhD.

The birth of my connection with Jon Darch was a little different to Caton and Daykin. We spent several months following each other on Twitter, often retweeting the same articles before we made direct contact. It was clearly evident throughout the summer of 2014 that Darch was an influential node within the core Safe Standing network, but did not represent the views of the FSF directly, nor were his tweets speaking for the organisation. His tweets generally followed two trends. Firstly they were promotional in the sense of spreading the work of his Rail Seating roadshow, and secondly they sought to make official contact with clubs, fan groups and journalists to lobby for Safe Standing in various ways. I thus wanted to observe Darch's online interactions over a period of time because he seemed to be very active and well connected. Furthermore, many of the online newspaper articles and fanzine articles I read during the course of 2014 would make reference to Rail Seating and his *Safe Standing Roadshow*. The following year in February 2015, I sent Darch a direct message informing him of my intention to present some contextual research into the background of the all-seating legislation at a UK based conference, and invited him to attend. Whilst he couldn't make the conference, we did exchange email addresses and would continue to message each other directly via Twitter, private messenger and email throughout the course of my research. I document these early connections here because they were critically important in establishing myself and my



research, and the subsequent emails with Caton, Daykin and Darch over the course of 2014 and 2015 had begun the process of name generating within the core Safe Standing network. And whilst documentary research continued to be important during this stage, I was by early 2015 in a position to connect with other members of the network albeit as an *outsider* (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

However, I also realised that my research contained a strong historical focus, and so it was extremely difficult to initially map or plot the story beyond these core FSF network nodes. What Caton's book did provide was a useful reference point to those earlier campaigns that he had documented, and the names of the key activists associated with them. Having identified Caton (and later with Jacks) as the 'leader' of *SUSD*, and Daykin as coordinator of Safe Standing, it made sense to identify the 'leader(s)' of the third campaign, '*SAFE*'. In doing so, my research would connect with a core network during the second *timescale*. Caton's book was consistent with online newspaper and fanzine article searches around 'standing at football' during the development of the FTF in the late 1990s and identified the names of two core fan activists; Phill Gatenby and Mark Longden. Interestingly, Gatenby was a fellow Manchester City supporter whilst Longden supported rivals, Manchester United, and whilst I knew Caton's book was only one documentary source, and thus unlikely to have captured the stories of other club-specific protests and campaigns, connecting with Gatenby and Longden would, nonetheless, allow me to broadly map key second and third *timescale* developments. Like Caton, Daykin, Jacks and Darch, Mark Longden had a Twitter profile albeit a much more understated one with fewer than twenty followers. However, I was confident I identified the right person based on his profile stating he was from Manchester and more importantly, that he was following Daykin and Jacks. This connected the two *timescales* and confirmed some of the details from Caton's book. Mark followed me back during February 2015 and a couple of direct

messages later we began emailing each other. The importance of this connection is also discussed in detail during chapters 4–6.

Whilst this early stage of digital research had proved highly successful, Phill Gatenby was not a Twitter user and no longer lived in the UK having moved to the USA a few years earlier. However, both Mark Londgen and Peter Caton had kept in touch with Phill via Facebook and both offered me his email address. Upon eventually emailing Gatenby, I learned Caton and Longden had already briefed him on my research. By March 2015, I had connected with all three standing campaigns and the core ‘leaders’.

Having contextualised the empirical point of entry into the story of Safe Standing, the chapter documents how data collection naturally evolved over the course of 2015-2019. The complexity of researching a relational social movement meant that it was very difficult to design a structured methodological framework. In other words, immersing oneself in various fields and establishing trust and relationships, produced different questions and types of data at different stages of the research. However, data was generally collected using five different methods.

1. A continued period in the online field (observing and interacting with Safe Standing and networks via Twitter).
2. Undertaking in-depth qualitative interviews and oral histories, initially with the core leaders and then others named both by those core networks and other forms of archived sources.
3. Analysing archived data from 1989-2019 in the form of FSA and FSF newsletters, campaign documents, newspaper articles and fanzines.
4. Observations and field notes taken from participating in a number of FSF annual conferences during the course of the research.

5. Observations and field notes taken over a period of three years (2016-2019) upon being invited to join the core FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network*.

It is important to note here that these five methods were adopted, to qualitatively analyse the storied dimensions of protest, and in doing so produced a lot of names and informal networks, which had to be recorded and investigated before identifying those most relevant to interview. I began with the following types of documentary sources; King, Brown and Nash's research into 1990s ISA fan networks, Caton's biography of *SAFE, SUSU*, and *Safe Standing*, and various online newspapers (both tabloid and broadsheet) which documented concrete events relating to *Safe Standing*, producing discursive material to be analysed alongside the recording of interviews and field notes. It also made sense based on previous research to use the online *When Saturday Comes* (WSC) fanzine as an additional documentary source, however the articles were predominantly limited to the second and third *timescale* based on internet searches producing events from 1999-2019. In terms of the FSF itself, I analysed a 51 page report which they had published into 'the case for *Safe Standing* at major football stadia in England and Wales in June 2007, and any other materials available via their website, including conference minutes, election nominations, annual reports and various copies of its magazine *The Football Supporter* from 2002-2010.

The final method captures how my access to the network evolved from 2014 and moved beyond an 'outsider' to the space between 'insider' and 'outsider' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Those connections form the basis of my qualitative research into the stories told by supporters during the third *timescale* and are discussed at various points throughout chapters 4–6. Finally, whilst time and space do not allow me to document every online connection and interaction, it is important to state here that they continued throughout the whole third *timescale*. This period is thus characterised by combining online and offline interactions and can be considered a form of digital or virtual ethnography (Hine, 200). In other words, some of these interactions and connections led me to undertake formal oral

histories and interviews with core members of the Safe Standing network, whilst others acted as a catalyst for further online and offline interactions and observations. As Orgad (2005, p.62) notes, ‘combining online and offline interactions with informants enhances the ways in which researchers are positioned in relation to their informants, and the ways they come to know them’.

### *In depth interviews and oral life histories*

Whilst I sought to avoid interpreting individual fan/actor understanding as the basis of social reality, I nonetheless considered the narrative accounts of networks from various actors’ points of view as important to establish ties, and to understand what the core activists were saying as networked communities. della Porta (2014, p.228) suggests that ‘in social movement studies, the relative scarcity of systematic collections of documents or reliable databases gives in-depth interviews even more importance’. I initially found this to be the case. Whilst Caton’s book and a collection of online newspaper and fanzine articles became important documentary sources, they nonetheless failed to bring human agency to the centre of movement analysis (Blee, 2013). Furthermore, Blee and Taylor (2002, p.95), suggest interviews enable researchers to ‘gain an insight into both individual and collective visions, imaginings, hopes, expectations, critique of the present and projection of the future on which the possibility of collective action rests and through which social movements form, endure or disband’. However, because like Crossley (2015) my focus centred upon learning how and why particular networks emerged in the way they did, where they did and when they did, at various points from 1989-2019, I argue that it made sense to approach interviews in a way which incorporated the ‘life stories’ (McCracken, 1988) or ‘life histories’ (Becker, 2002) of those recruited to and embedded in these networks, specific to, but not limited to, the FSA and FSF. Moreover, as Corrigall-Brown and Ho (2013) note,

life histories can be particularly useful for researchers interested in generating rich and textured detail to analyse questions related to the role of social networks in recruitment, in this case both to various ISAs, the FSA and FSF and the campaigns themselves. Furthermore, oral (life) history as a method allows researchers to ‘reconstruct a particular historical period from the side of those who did mobilise whilst learning about respondents’ memory which gives meaning to the past by (re)constructing it as a narrative in the present’ (Bosi and Reiter 2014, p.118). And so I followed Blee and Taylor (2002) in using oral history (combined with other methods) to explore, discover and interpret the complex social events and processes within these networks.

One of the key challenges faced, however, was the knowledge that life histories, taken as constructs are inseparable from the interactional process (Rosenthal 1993). Indeed, in some cases, the stories recollected were over ten or even twenty years old making micro-mobilisations difficult to remember, and perhaps difficult to interpret as a genuine truthful recollection. Furthermore, by tackling the inevitability of my views being critically inadequate, I sought to ensure that whilst I needed to establish trust and credibility in a way which would facilitate open dialogue, I framed the questions to focus more on the networks, tactics and mobilisations rather than on the merits of the issue itself – even *if* I did personally support the issue, and those interviewed believed I did too. Nonetheless, whilst acknowledging these challenges, I still believed they would be the most appropriate method to pay some attention to the flow of time, and especially on the relation between past and present, and would enable me through interaction with life histories, to place the individual in a wider space, where lives are lived within social networks (della Porta, 2014). Finally, as della Porta (2014) notes, it is the exploratory value of in depth interviews and life histories which is particularly significant within research into social movements as networks.

My approach to using in-depth interviews and life histories was to see them as a type of conversation which was largely unstructured but premised upon three cultural relational themes;

1. The biography of the interviewee, in terms of how they entered the social world of football and how they became involved with supporter activism not limited to the FSA, ISAs or the FSF networks.
2. Identifying their personal social networks and the importance of these networks and resources.
3. How they became involved with Safe Standing or other standing campaign networks.

I believed that constructing the conversation around these three themes would produce a rich qualitative account of the storied dimensions of protest in order to discover the shared understandings of Safe Standing and the ways in which those networks mutually defined and negotiated the conflict, tactics, choices and strategies central to micro-mobilisations across multiple *timescales*. della Porta (2014, p.241) suggests that interviewing “experts” can ‘help gain a better perspective on the fields, and on potential interview partners’ and so having connected with core members of the these networks, I believed this would allow me to examine the ways in which they are bound into mutually sustaining social relations. To achieve this, I began by drawing upon Gatenby, Longden and Caton’s knowledge of FSA networks and Daykin, Caton and Darch’s core role within the FSF to examine how the FSA and FSF were and are important to help switch various ISAs, supporter groups and trusts, and important individuals to build relationships and durable networks which characterise issues like Safe Standing as movement with both local and national significance.

As a type of theoretically informed empirical research, I recognised that the sampling of people to interview would be chosen on a conceptual basis whereby ‘the goal was to secure a spread of individuals that represented all of the types of groups that were significant’ for this research (Miller 2000, p.77). As della Porta (2014, p.241) notes, this type of sampling is iterative in that it involves moving backwards and forwards between sampling and theoretical reflection. However, I knew it would be extremely difficult to map such dense networks across a period of thirty years. And so sampling techniques varied during the course of data collection to ensure I moved beyond core members of the FSA and FSF in order to access broader segments of the movement’s participants that were represented in the documentary sources and other archived materials produced (Blee, 2013). Based on both these documentary sources used and the snowballing of names within various networks told by those initial core leaders of the three campaigns, the interviewees were broadly characteristic of four mutually influencing *timescales* across 1989-2019;

1. The FSA as the first national supporter organisation formed in 1985 up to its merger with the NFFSC in 2002.
2. The FSF as the current national supporter organisation involved with coordinating Safe Standing.
3. The three documented campaigns to permit standing at football (*SAFE*, *SUSD*, and Safe Standing).
4. Various coalition-based networks connected through and to the FSA, ISAs, Supporter Trusts and the FSF across multiple *timescales*.

Some of those interviewed were both informer and participant (Weiss 1994). I list all those interviewed below and note the various roles held during the three *timescales*. Important biographical and network data is analysed and discussed during chapters 4–6.

<b>Rogan Taylor</b> (founding member and first FSA chair from 1985-1989)
<b>Peter Garrett</b> (founding member and FSA secretary from 1985-1993)
<b>Tony Goulbourn</b> (founding member of the Sheffield FSA branch and FSA chair from 1989-1990)
<b>Craig Brewin</b> (founding member of the London FSA branch and FSA chair from 1990-1991)
<b>David Lee</b> (founding member of the Teeside FSA branch and FSA chair from 1991 to 1993)
<b>Steve Beauchampé</b> (FSA international officer from 1990-1998 and fanzine writer)
<b>Paul Thomas</b> (FSA international officer, academic, and member of Leeds United's <i>Marching Altogether</i> fan network)
<b>Alison Pilling</b> (Member of Leeds United's <i>Marching Altogether</i> fan network, FSA chair from 1998-1999, <i>CoFS</i> chair from 1998-2000)
<b>Adam Brown</b> (academic, member of IMUSA, member of the FSA and <i>CoFS</i> network)
<b>Andy Walsh</b> (member of IMUSA, member of the <i>CoFS</i> network, member of the FSA)
<b>Perry McMillan</b> (member of SISA, member of the <i>CoFS</i> , member of the FSA)



**Mark Longden** (chair of IMUSA, member of the *CoFS*, member of the FSA, national council member of the FSF, member of *SAFE* and Safe Standing networks)

**Phill Gatenby** (secretary of the CSA, member of the FSA committee, leader of *SAFE*, coordinator of the Safe Standing network from 2002-2009, national council member of the FSF)

**Malcolm Clarke** (FSA and FSF chair from 1999 to present, member of the FA council representing the FSF and SD from 2007 to present, member of FSF Safe Standing online Google network)

**Steven Powell** (founding member of AISA, member of the FSA, director of policy and campaigns at the FSF, national council member of the FSF, member of FSF Safe Standing online Google network)

**Peter Caton** (member of the FSA, founder and leader of the *SUSD* campaign, national council member of the FSF, member of FSF Safe Standing online Google network)

**Amanda Jacks** (member of the *SUSD* campaign, FSF caseworker on policing and stewarding, national council member of the FSF, member of FSF Safe Standing online Google network)

**Martin O'Hara** (deputy chair of the FSF, member of FSF Safe Standing online Google network)

**Chris Nash** (coordinator of the Safe Sanding network in 2009, national council member of the FSF)

<p><b>Peter Daykin</b> (coordinator of the core FSF Safe Standing network from 2009 to present, national council member of the FSF, former fanzine writer/editor, moderator of FSF Safe Standing online Google network)</p>
<p><b>Michael Brunskill</b> (former fanzine writer, FSF director of communications, member of FSF Safe Standing online Google network)</p>
<p><b>Jon Darch</b> (member of the FSF, leader of the Safe Standing Roadshow, member of FSF Safe Standing online Google network)</p>
<p><b>Dave Boyle</b> (former chief executive of SD, member of the FSA, and national council member of the FSF)</p>
<p><b>Duncan Drasdo</b> (chief executive of the MUST, former committee member of Shareholders United, member of IMUSA, member of the FSF, member of FSF Safe Standing online Google network)</p>
<p><b>Stuart Dykes</b> (supporter liaison officer for SD Europe and UEFA, member of FSE)</p>
<p><b>Owen Riches</b> (Ipswich town supporter and leader of the Safe Standing E-petition)</p>

Before I conducted each interview the aim of the research was outlined. Each interview ranged from approximately one to two hours in length. It is impractical to contextualise every interview undertaken here because those connections themselves are part of the research story and analysis in chapters 4–6. To prepare for the interviews I consulted the work of della Porta (2014) as a general basis for good practice in social movement research,

in particular the importance of knowing how to listen without imposing one's own categories and to pay attention to the flow of conversation. Through previous research into social movements, I was aware that I would likely be talking to people with a deep commitment and willingness to have their experiences heard. In some cases, I suspected individuals might see the interview as a way of recording personal achievements and relationships which have had a significant impact on their lives. As such, I knew it would be necessary to leave them space to talk openly as they connected with the core themes. However, I did not over prepare for the interviews because as della Porta (2014, p.247) argues, 'no extraordinary skill is considered necessary to become a good interviewer', but attention should be paid to 'introducing the theme, listening to responses and generating new questions'.

The key challenge I faced was identifying the relevant place where the conversation would take place. For most of those I identified during the initial stages of research, I knew that face to face interviews were impractical due to geographical location and cost of travel as a postgraduate student. Whilst this would have been my preferred method so that I could observe the body language of all those interviewed, I decided to initially mix a combination of telephone and Skype interviews (della Porta 2014, p.248), but in doing so, realised that they may make the building of 'trust more difficult and distraction easier'. Symonds et al. (2016) note how Skype opens up new possibilities for qualitative interviews by allowing researchers to contact participants in a time efficient and affordable manner, whilst recognising they can limit the establishment of rapport and understanding non-verbal cues. Nonetheless, they found that although these interviews cannot completely replace face to face interaction they do work well as a viable alternative and complimentary data collection tool for qualitative research Symonds et al, (2016). My approach to using Skype was to only consider voice and not video recordings as I felt this would ensure the interviewee was not distracted by my note taking. For those who had a Skype account, the

calls made direct were free, whilst for those who did not, the online tool still allowed me to call direct to their landline or mobile phone but at a cost.

As the data collection process evolved, I found my access to supporter activists improved significantly and facilitated a mix of some telephone and Skype interviews with some face to face at various stages, and in a range of diverse places throughout the course of 2015-2019. della Porta (2014, p.242) notes that ‘given qualitative interviews tend to be invasive with respect to private life, it is particularly important from the ethical point of view to reach a clear agreement with the interviewee’. As such, everyone interviewed was informed beforehand of the nature of the study and was offered the opportunity to speak in a recorded or non-recorded capacity. Only a couple of interviewee’s spoke “off the record” at minimal points during the interview. Everyone interviewed gave formal consent to be both recorded using the online QuickTime player tool and named in the writing up of data following the British Sociological Association guidelines. The interviews with Duncan Drasdo and Stuart Dykes were not formally recorded due to connection problems and so the analysis of these interviews derived from notes taken.

It became clear throughout the research that Kevin Miles was *the* most influential central node in connecting various coalition and cooperation networks across the three *timescales*. However, whilst showing some initial interest in the research, Miles did not take part. Nonetheless, having formed positive relationships with those very close to him, whilst also being a co-member of the *FSF Safe Standing online Google network*, I believed he’d find both myself and the research credible.

### *Archival Research*

Bosi and Reiter (2014) note that most historical work on social movements is based on archival research. Whilst it was not the purpose of my research to specifically assess the

authenticity and validity of historical sources themselves, I knew nonetheless, that researching multiple *timescales* would involve some historical inquiry. This was particularly challenging because very little was published on the FSA itself as an organisation, independent of recorded events made public within the *Hillsborough Independent Panel's* disclosed materials and reports, and the organisation's own report into Hillsborough accessible via the *National Archives online catalogue*. Furthermore, whilst the literature reviewed in chapter 2 documented the interplay between FSA, football fanzines, and ISA networks during the 1990s, the rich detail of the FSA's emergence in 1985 remained under explored. However, documentary sources and online connections produced two significant empirical moments during the collection of data in 2016 which helped to address this historical gap.

As I began to organise the documentary sources into three research folders (1989-1999; 1999-2009; 2009-2019), I created a timeline which firstly encompassed the names of those who had either chaired or vice chaired the FSA and FSF or held roles as regional branch officers. Secondly, I identified the names of those who were central within important FSA/ISA connections, and in doing so, focused on those who helped build relational collective action through the *CoFS*. Thirdly, I identified the names of those who had played a leading role in mobilising both small-scale, club-specific Standing protests and those nationally coordinated by the FSA, *CoFS* and FSF. The online disclosure of the *Hillsborough Independent Panel's* materials and reports helped to start this process through the published minutes of various FSA council meetings in 1989 with specific reference to the Taylor Inquiry. The minutes from the council meetings on 9 July and 30 July 1989, recorded a total of 26 FSA members, and whilst I knew some of these would likely be older than those FSF activists I had begun to connect with online, I nonetheless began to search for them using Twitter. Surprisingly, I was confident I had identified up to 7 of the 26 based on both their profile location matching the FSA region they had represented and the

particular type of football-based accounts they were themselves following. My approach to contacting them was to tweet a general message asking if they would be interested in following my account which would enable me to speak directly about my research. A few days later, I had connected with 6 of the 7 and was in a position to either message them directly (and privately) or had obtained their personal email address. These were: **Peter Garrett** (FSA chair for the purpose of both meetings), **Dave Juson** (South Coast branch), **Gary Marks** (Avon branch), **Adrian Goldberg** (West Midlands branch), **Tony Goulbourn** (region not named), and **Graham Turvey** (Chiltern branch).

At this stage, my main aim was to identify supporter activists from an empirically under-researched historical period with the hope that if successful, one or two may agree to be interviewed. However, after various emails with Graham Turvey and a phone call with Peter Garrett, I was very fortunate to be offered personal access to their individual FSA archive containing over several hundred documents in a range of folders from a period of direct and indirect involvement (throughout the course of 1985-2003). I would later learn that Peter Garrett (along with Rogan Taylor) was the founding member of the FSA in 1985. During the summer of 2016, both Turvey and Garrett informed me of respective holiday plans to visit Southampton agreed to meet me with their archives. Turvey generously offered me his whole archive to store permanently in my office at work, whilst Garrett loaned me his archive for several days until he returned from holiday. The latter provided an opportunity, with his consent, to photocopy and photograph key documents which I identified as relevant for my research. After spending several weeks sifting through the hundreds of documents, I coded the 1989-1999 research folder into four sections or themes (although some of the FSA data covered 1985-1989). These were;

1. FSA biographical data (network data, conference minutes and notes)

2. Information pertaining to Hillsborough, the Taylor Report and *Football Spectators Act*
3. Specific letters and campaigns against all-seated stadia
4. FSA newsletters and magazines

Whilst I knew not all of this data would be analysed throughout the course of this research and that there would likely be personal archives of other FSA activists stored elsewhere, I was nonetheless confident I had enough material to contextualise the role in which the FSA played in establishing networks of interactions and relations between supporters during the first *timescale*. And because these archives were incredibly rich covering most of the FSA's core published materials across the first two *timescales*, I decided not to pursue any further archives beyond those of Turvey and Garrett. The FSA official newsletter/magazine had gone through a series of name changes throughout the course of 1985-2009, including *Reclaim the Game*, *The Football Supporter* and *FSF news*. The archives had presented me with various issues from 1989, 1990, 1991, 1995, 1999, (two editions from 2000), (three editions from 2001), 2002, and (three editions from 2003). These newsletters and magazines were important because they contained important network data in terms of various roles and divisions of labour and the relations between the FSA, various football fanzines, initiatives to connect fans across leading ISAs and emerging Safe Standing (terracing) protests. However, whilst I was in a position to obtain various FSF newsletters, magazines and annual reports during the third *timescale* from 2009 to 2019, because most of these were stored online, I had identified an archival gap between 2003 and 2009. To overcome this, I contacted the FSF's Director of Communications Michael Brunskill who informed me that the entire FSF archive was stored at the former headquarters and home of AFC Wimbledon in Kingston-upon-Thames. And in doing so, connected me to Tim Hillyer as FSF national council member and member

of Dons Trust at AFC Wimbledon who agreed to meet on Friday 13 April, 2018 where I was able to spend a whole day researching the archive and obtain copies of important materials which connected all three *timescales*.

### *Participant Observation and Digital Ethnography*

Balsiger and Lambelet (2014) suggest there are three core aspects that together define what participant observation is within studies of social movements. These are; ‘collecting “first-hand” data’, ‘moving the observation scale’ and ‘experiencing’. These three elements facilitate a ‘deeper understanding of social life’ with a commitment to ‘reflexivity’ (Clifford and Marcus 1986) as discussed earlier. Whilst King’s research fully achieved all three aspects of participant observation, Balsiger and Lambelet (2014, p.146) note that ‘many researchers use this method without making it the central piece of their methodology: attending some meetings to get in touch with activists, making observations before and after interviews or using it in the preliminary phase of research’. In order to have achieved full participant observation within the context of my research, I would need to have been active within the core networks across all three *timescales* as an activist scholar or a key member of the FSF upon entering the story of Safe Standing in 2010. Secondly, I would need to be active within the independent Manchester City supporter group ‘1894’, which is a contemporary type of ISA and officially affiliated to the FSF. This would have enabled me to fully immerse myself within a local network and observe the interplay between the FSF and contemporary ISAs with regards to Safe Standing. In doing so, it would have also ensured I attended regional and national FSF conferences, not as an isolated individual supporter, but part of a supporter network. Consequently, even though I publicly declared my interest in Safe Standing via my Twitter profile and would observe online participation and events, I began the research very much as an ‘outsider’.



Becoming a member of the FSF in 2013, however, did connect me with the culture of the organisation through participant observation at national conferences. During the course of 2014, I learned that several fellow academics whom I had connected with at various conferences through the dissemination of my research were also members of the FSF and interested in supporter activism and politics. Therefore, from 2015-2019, I attended the national conference each summer, not as an isolated Manchester City season ticket holder and postgraduate researcher but as part of an academic and football supporter network community. As I began to make contact with members of the core FSF Safe Standing network, I used these events to introduce myself in person during refreshment breaks and specific Safe Standing related workshops. During one conference in Manchester, I spent an hour with Jon Darch and FSF chair Malcolm Clarke discussing various aspects of the movement. My active presence at these events not only enabled me to observe the symbolic dimensions of protest (Balsiger and Lambelet, 2014), but further strengthened my own relational position within the story of Safe Standing and the core FSF network.

Throughout the course of 2015-2019, I was able to achieve a 'blending in' the FSF national conference field by becoming familiar with key individuals. It is important to note also that these observations occurred during various stages of interview research and so by 2017, I was in a position whereby most of the FSF network whom I had spoken to at length on the telephone were able to recognise me and speak freely at the national conference. As Balsiger and Lambelet (2014, p.158) note, 'there are often things a researcher cannot change and that will always mark a distance to the groups studied', which in my case was the knowledge that I attended these events as a football supporter and member of the FSF, but more importantly, an academic researching Safe Standing. Nonetheless, I undertook different roles during my participant observation ranging from 'complete observer', 'observer-as-participant', 'participant as observer' but never quite 'complete participant'

(Watt and Scott Jones, 2010). And thus at various stages of the observation fieldwork, I compiled written notes which were both descriptive and analytical of events, people and places.

As the data collection progressed, however, relationships and even some friendships were formed with core members of not only the current Safe Standing network but earlier campaigns embedded within the second *timescale*, and so I found myself located in the ‘space between’ *insider* and *outsider* (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). During interviews, some core members would often reference an FSF *Safe Standing Google group network* as a space in which current tactics, strategies, conflicts are negotiated online. And on 18 July 2016, I received a formal email invitation from Peter Daykin to join this network. The group exists to discuss and coordinate the Safe Standing movement, containing a variety of interested people within and outside of the core FSF network. Upon joining, I was informed that discussions would be emailed to me directly in real time. Moreover, I also had access to an online archive of previous discussion threads. It is important to state here, that I did not ask to be invited, nor did I expect to be, and in continuing to reflexively consider my role in the research process, whilst I did not ‘feel’ “too close” to the group, having used the interviews and documentary sources as a way into researching the *lifeworld* of Safe Standing as a networked movement, my role as both postgraduate researcher and football supporter had formed a relational network with Safe Standing. And whilst I had not previously taken part in any other form of social movement, I had become a member of this networked community during a specific movement *timescale*.

This approach to investigating the multiple connections which suffuse online contexts has been informed by notions of multi-sited ethnography which became prominent in the 1990s (Hine, 2008). According to Kendall (2011), this is characterised by the growth and impact of the internet which facilitates the study of virtual communities and networks which both blend online and offline contacts. My research was able to combine online and

offline interactions with central members of the Safe Standing network and in doing so enhanced my position in relation to the network and the way I came to know them (Orgad, 2005). This provided unique access, opportunities but also methodological challenges during the third *timescale*. The first challenge encountered was on the 18 July 2016 when Peter Daykin, upon inviting myself asked everyone to write a short paragraph explaining why they were part of the network and where their specific interest lay. I realised this would mean having to disclose my academic identity and interest and thus reinforce my position as ‘participant as observer’ (Watt and Scott Jones, 2010). Nonetheless, having already established positive relationships with some core members of the network, I felt comfortable positioning my research within a short biography which reinforced my passion for football. In July 2016, this network comprised of the following individuals:

<b>Amanda Jacks</b> – FSF Caseworker and West Ham United Supporter
<b>Daniel Pratt</b> – Secretary of Gillingham Independent Supporters Club
<b>Dave Beverley</b> – FSF member and Scunthorpe United Supporter
<b>David Little</b> – Member of Swansea City Supporters Trust
<b>David Pennington</b> – Vice Chair of Manchester United Supporters Trust
<b>David Rose</b> – Deputy CEO of FSF and Sunderland Supporter
<b>Duncan Drasdo</b> – CEO of Manchester United Supporters Trust
<b>Gemma Teale</b> – Member of Brentford Independent Association of Supporters
<b>Jon Darch</b> – FSF member and Operator of Safe Standing Roadshow
<b>John Keen</b> – Member of Reading Supporters Trust
<b>Kevin Miles</b> – CEO of FSF and Newcastle United Supporter
<b>Liam Thompson</b> – FSF communications officer and Newcastle Supporter
<b>Malcolm Clarke</b> – FSF Chair and FA Council Representative
<b>Mark Allen</b> – Academic and member Chelsea Supporters Trust
<b>Mark Turner</b> – PhD researcher and Manchester City Supporter
<b>Martin O’Hara</b> – FSF Deputy Chair and Secretary of Doncaster Rovers Supporters Trust

<b>Michael Brunskill</b> – FSF Director of Communications and Sunderland Supporter
<b>Peter Daykin</b> – FSF Safe Standing Coordinator and Sunderland Supporter
<b>Peter Caton</b> – FSF member and West Ham United Supporter
<b>Rhys Williams</b> – Member of Brentford Independent Association of Supporters
<b>Simon Magner</b> – Chair of Everton Supporters Trust
<b>Steven Powell</b> – FSF member and Arsenal Supporter
<b>Tim Payton</b> – Spokesperson for Arsenal Supporters Trust
<b>Tom Greatrex</b> – Founder of Fulham Supporters Trust and previously an MP

Having obtained access to this online network, I was in a position to use a filter facility which enabled me to search for key words, topics or threads and to narrow the search to specific time periods. In doing so, I was able to identify the point at which this online network emerged and who the first members were. The first wave of online interactions began in April, 2011 led by Jon Darch and some of these discussions inform the data analysis during the third *timescale* in chapter 6. In September 2011, Peter Daykin posted a thread titled the *Safe Standing group* which characterised the core network as the ‘magnificent seven’ and in doing so reinforced the various roles each member adopted. These were;

<b>Malcolm Clarke</b>
<b>Peter Caton</b>
<b>Chris Nash</b>
<b>Jon Darch</b>
<b>Amanda Jacks</b>
<b>Dave Beverley</b>
<b>Peter Daykin</b>

Daykin then named six periphery members who had also undertaken various supporting roles within the network. These were;

<b>Stuart Wood</b>
<b>Jon Keen</b>
<b>Martin O’Hara</b>
<b>Steven Powell</b>
<b>Michael Brunskill</b>
<b>David Rose</b>

From the first wave of interactions in April, 2011 to the end of my research, this online network contained over 1600 topic threads and thus several thousand individual posts. However, my position primarily remained ‘participant as observer’ which is akin to a ‘lurker’ (Tagarelli, 2017) or a silent observer. Whilst the network contained a rich stream of data spanning several years, the main strength of being inside was that it allowed me to get a feel for the ways in which key members interacted and debated the various tactics and strategies in real time. In doing so, I became aware of the most influential players and those with the strongest ties, both inside the core network but also to other stakeholders within the football industry. Some of these observations again informed the analysis of data in chapter 6, and enabled me to analyse other data including written materials and qualitative interviews in a more reliable manner.

Finally, at the close of my research, the network included five additional members;

<b>Anthony Armstrong</b> of Newcastle United Supporters Trust
<b>Keith Sharp</b> of Tottenham Hotspur Supporters Trust
<b>Trevor Whitehead</b> of Huddersfielf Town Supporters Trust
<b>Katrina Law</b> of Tottenham Hotspur Supporters Trust
<b>Henry Fowler</b> of Chelsea Supporters Trust

## DATA ANALYSIS

Although I chose not to include specific data in the form of personal online posts from the FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network*, this information was still valued because it helped me to spend a long period in the virtual field, and thus discover the discursive rhythms and patterns of communication (Millward, 2009). Additionally, it enabled me to capture interaction sequences from 2016-2019 and how online discussions created new interpretative frames and strategies. And so whilst I did not use specific topic threads and personal posts *as data*, the broader macro-level events which gave those threads and posts contextual meaning, were used in a way to record important mobilisations during the third *timescale* and extended those other observations undertaken and the field notes generated both online through my presence in the Twittersphere (Rowe, 2014) and offline at the annual FSF *Supporter Summit* from 2015-2019. According to Balsiger and Lambelet (2014), analysing and collecting fieldwork data are not always temporarily separated because the regular taking of field notes implies constant analytical work which often creates new questions and themes that are then explored through future observations and interviews. To achieve this, my data analysis involved a small research diary which contained descriptive observations of discussions which took place at various Safe Standing breakaway workshops at the Supporter Summit. These observations primarily centred on networks and interactions (who was there, who talked to who, who worked with who etc.) and mobilisations (what events were taking place and what strategies were being developed etc.).

To analyse the archival data, the creation of three large folders covering each *timescale* focused on key FSA/FSF biographical themes and captured changes in networks, and mobilisations against the all-seating legislation. This data predominantly consisted of various newsletters, magazines, conference minutes and other networked publications. The analysis of the data involved coding various letters chronologically across each *timescale*

and this enabled me to interpret how the core FSA and FSF networks and mobilisations had evolved. This produced a rich micro-level analysis in the form of a relational movement narrative as presented in chapters 4–6.

Finally, the qualitative interviews were undertaken as a type of activist life story (McCracken, 1988) and thus I followed della Porta's (2014) approach to analysing them in a 'restructured' way by creating three stages of analysis as a type of summary for each life history. These were, a chronology of their story, a semi-codified scheme which examined three areas (how they became involved with the FSA, fanzines, ISAs, FSF and various standing protests) and a synthesis of those main themes. This approach was grounded in interpretivism where the attention is on the practices of elaboration of different socially constructed versions of the social world of football and the networks which build relational collective action. To achieve this, I immersed myself in listening to the interview recordings but avoided the literal transcription of every interview. This followed the approach of Kaufmann (2009) who proposed transcription be more fragmentary and so some interviews were fully transcribed but most were not and instead summarised by noting what I considered as worthy of interest to the storied dimensions of protest. And although there are no formal interpretive rules for analysis (della Porta, 2014), I generally coded the data using three core themes which were; the biography of the interviewee, their recruitment to a network (FSA, ISA, FSF) and their knowledge of, or interaction with, various campaigns against the all-seating legislation. The connections between these networks across multiple *timescales* enabled me to analyse Safe Standing as a social movement rather than just a campaign.

## ETHICS

All ethical procedures recommended by the British Sociological Association have been followed. All interviewees were informed in advance about the nature of the research and with the right to withdraw (none did). All interviewees were offered the right to anonymity in the write up, but all chose to be named. Where some interviewees went 'off record', that data was not used in the write up. The main ethical challenges centred upon data generated within the online FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network*. My approach was to email Peter Daykin as moderator of that group and ask if he'd be happy to grant permission to document some of the events discussed but in a way which ensured no direct posts themselves were used. This meant that I avoided taking any material directly beyond listing the names of those who were involved in that network. Importantly, I did not assign anyone's name to anything said online to ensure anonymity because some of the material was confidential. Appropriate measures were taken to store all research data including archived materials, research diaries, observation notes, recordings and transcriptions in a secure locked cabinet inside my office and on a password protected personal computer.



## CONCLUSION

This chapter covers the practical, theoretical and philosophical issues which emerged in the design, data collection and analysis phases of the research. According to Crossley and Edwards (2016) sociological methodologies of movement research must be attuned to the relational nature of social reality. Whilst Social Network Analysis (SNA) has become the dominant methodological tool for researching the social world as constituted by interaction and ties between social actors, they recognised that relational methodologies should look to incorporate different methods coherently. However, there remains a quantitative bias in research which examines patterns of network connections. In this research, I adopt a qualitative approach because I am interested in the mechanisms of those patterns of connections and the meanings activists give them intersubjectively through networked storied dimensions of protest. This qualitative methodology is critically important to understand how relational mechanisms capture the complex interplays of (inter)action across different timescales and in doing so, brings the importance of temporality to the centre of movement analysis (Gillan, 2018). I thus argue scholars of football supporter movements should look to develop a multifaceted interpretivist methodology which incorporates archival, online and offline observations and rich qualitative life histories as key data sources. This is important to understanding not only how networks and the meanings their interactions generate themselves change but also how the *timescape* in which they are embedded contains different *timescales* which interact economically, politically and culturally.

## CHAPTER FOUR

1989 – 1999

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter argues that to understand the initial impact which Hillsborough had both on the perception of standing terraces and the ritual of watching football, attention must be paid to supporters' interaction with the game across a neoliberal *timescape* which was *in* movement. Central to this analysis, were the mechanisms which produced mobilisations against the increasing criminalisation of fans, and in doing so, sought to transform the landscape of fan politics in England. In this chapter, I argue that these mechanisms were the product of coordination between three relational social movements from 1985-1999. In their analysis of social movements, Meyer and Whitter (1994, p.277) argued that movements 'are not distinct or self-contained, rather they grow from and give birth to other movements, work in coalition and influence each other indirectly'. To achieve this, four mechanisms of transmission between movements occur. Firstly, organisations form coalitions. Secondly, movement communities often overlap. Thirdly, movements share similar personnel. And finally, they connect to broader changes in the external environment. Consequently, movements influence movements and often create spillovers during periods of widespread change. The chapter argues that these three relational football supporter movements were underpinned by a broad commitment to social democracy and what constituted the appropriate consumption of football. And whilst having their own dynamics, they addressed themselves to overlapping socially democratic policies, interests and participants and in doing so developed some shared ways of working together creating networks of networks of networks (Cleland et al. 2018).

As documented in chapter 2, two of these movements, football fanzines and ISAs, were researched empirically during the first *timescale* (Jary, Horne and Bucke, 1991; King, 1998, Nash, 2000). However there remained a research gap into the third; the FSA, which as a national supporter organisation, sought to build a movement of active supporter representation within the governance of professional football. As social movements, they were not characterised by their organizational nature, rather as della Porta and Diani (1999, p.16) argue, were made by ‘networks of interaction between different actors which may either include formal organisations or not, depending on shifting circumstances’. As such, my research pays attention to the solidarities between the core networks which connected these organisations. And so this chapter addresses this research gap by arguing that the FSA helped agitate a collective sense of social unrest and strain amongst wider club-specific supporter networks in England. These networks, in turn, created moral and solidarity incentives against the increasing criminalisation of fans and neoliberal consumption of football.

To show this, the chapter offers a rich micro-level analysis of what Blumer referred to as the first stage in the career of a social movement; that being, the process of social unrest. According to Blumer (1951), social unrest occurs when agitators get under the skin of others and try to inspire emotional reactions to the social problems they face. By documenting how, where and why the FSA emerged as a national supporter movement in English football in 1985, the chapter shows that whilst it failed to mobilise mass supporter membership, it was successful in building a critical mass of highly skilled and resourced supporters, notably from cities such as Liverpool, London, Sheffield, Birmingham, Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester and Southampton, who themselves formed regional branches by means of pre-existing networks (Snow et al. 1980). And in producing this social history, the chapter identifies the ways in which the various dynamics of fanzine, ISA and FSA networks, were collectively embedded within the neoliberal *timescale* of

English football during 1989-1999, and linked through various forms of concrete cooperation (Diani, 2003). I argue that these connections, produced what Gillan (2018) referred to as ‘coordination mechanisms’ which are crucial for the movement dynamics which follow the process of *emergence*.

And so the core contribution of this chapter, is to show the specific connections and interactions between these movements which together helped build an important social history of football supporter activism across emerging relational fields. I argue that the *CoFS*, as a hub-centred network, became the product of these connections and interactions and in doing so helped strengthen ties between these movements in order to build a more unified national supporter organisation at the turn of the twenty-first century. As Gillan (2018, p.5) noted, ‘the creation of such coordination mechanisms is the first agentic step that provides a significant part of the explanation for movement dynamics that follow’. Consequently, the rich micro-level analysis of the networks and patterns of connections which built this social history of supporter activism is significant, because it forms the basis of a temporal understanding movements (Gillan, 2018). In this case, the collective claims made about terracing post-Hillsborough, and the emergence of small-scale protests against the initial impact of the all-seating legislation, were themselves coordinated by central nodes within the *CoFS* network. And so this chapter stretches Meyer and Whitter’s (1994) analysis by arguing that the emergence of a movement against the all-seating legislation, grew not from another movement, but the networks, relations and interactions themselves which produced those coalitions, overlaps and spillovers between the FSA, ISAs and fanzines movements. Whilst chapters 5 and 6 document the development of strategic interaction on Safe Standing as a networked social movement against the all-seating legislation across 1999-2019, I argue those dynamics became a consequence of the coordination outlined here.

## ‘YOU’LL NEVER WALK ALONE’: THE KOPITE AGITATORS AND RECLAIMING THE GAME

On 8 August 1985, a letter to the editor of the *Guardian* newspaper was published in its Thursday edition, signed ‘yours faithfully, Rogan Taylor and Peter Garrett, *The Football Supporters Association (FSA), Halewood, Liverpool*’. It noted that Taylor and Garrett, along with a small group of fellow Liverpool and Everton supporters had formed the FSA with the principal aim of gaining supporter representation at every level of the organisation of professional football. As a network, they felt the time had come for a ‘critical mass of fans to organise and defend the game’ and invited ‘traditional supporters from every club in Britain to join this entirely independent body’, with the hope that success ‘could trigger the birth of similar groups in all the footballing countries of Europe’ (*The Guardian*, 1985). The newly formed FSA referenced Garrett’s home address at the bottom of the letter and within days of publication he’d received over a thousand letters, many of which included financial donations. Meanwhile, Taylor received a phone call from a BBC Newsnight TV researcher asking if the organisation would send along a couple of fan representatives to debate “where now for English football” with members of the Football League and Football Association. However, this was not the original intention of the article.

One week earlier, on Saturday 3 August, Taylor telephoned Garrett to discuss his idea for writing the article which was initially concerned with the corruption of relationships in football, with particular focus on UEFA in the wake of the Heysel stadium disaster which occurred just three months earlier. This letter was a product of social relations, networks and interactions. Rogan Taylor stood on the Kop alongside Garrett, Kevin Rutherford, Dave Bacon and Roger Findley. Earlier that year, this network were intending on going to the European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus at Heysel, but were unable to get tickets due to UEFA reducing the Liverpool allocation which resulted in the returning of hundreds of tickets to the club. According to Wright (2015), the Belgian football union had

taken the decision to sell some tickets, rather than allocate them to the two finalist clubs to increase its profits from the game. These fell into the hands of ticket touts, who sold the majority of 'neutral' tickets to Italian expatriates living in Brussels. Rogan Taylor, an academic finishing his PhD in psychoanalysis and the development of primitive therapeutic techniques in nomadic societies, was particularly suspicious of the heavy Italian presence within UEFA and the decision to stage the game in a 'crumbling' stadium unused to policing large football events. And a couple of months later in the wake of the disaster, he began to question 'what can we read from this event about the nature of football and the relationships which govern it?'

As a longstanding Liverpool fan I felt extremely guilty just simply by association - wasn't there, but I felt like the city was implicated. We have to remember this was in the middle of 10 years of Margaret Thatcher when Liverpool has been right royally fucked for a long time and in fact - you know, unemployment levels had been of course tremendously high and I mean one of the only two sources of excellence which the city felt it could claim was in sport and popular music, and here was one of those two vital sources of self-value amongst those sorely disadvantaged groups of young men living on the estates of Kirkby and Huyton and everywhere else - and this was the one thing that this city could hold its heads up, we could bang our chests, and say 'we are somebody, we are excellent at something, and we are one of the greatest clubs in Europe and we've got the pots to prove it - and I felt how painful that was - that the city to have removed that great force of pride.

Rogan Taylor (personal interview, 25 January 2016)

This importance of place and Liverpudlian identity characterised Garrett's biography also. As a Community Police Officer at Belle Vale police station who occasionally policed football matches at Anfield and Goodison Park, Garrett grew up in Cheshire after his parents moved from Liverpool at the end of the Second World War. He stood on the Kop with his father to watch the European games during the 1960s and followed Liverpool most weekends during the 1970s with his friend Roger Findley. According to Garrett, for Liverpudlians, 'football is in their blood, it is their religion'. That telephone call on 3 August led Garrett and four other members of their personal Merseyside social network, including fellow Kopite, Maggie Reid and Evertonian, Mark Goulbourn, to meet at

Taylor's house the following day to discuss the article he was writing. Goulbourn, who held a degree in Chemistry, had worked with Taylor for the Parks and Gardens Regeneration team at Liverpool City Council. Whilst it was Taylor's initial intention to focus on the corruption of relationships in the game, it became clear to Garrett that they were 'effectively calling for an organisations of fans, the kind of organisation which would be represented by people who could talk to power' (Taylor, 25 January 2016). Garrett proposed that the organisation be called 'the Football Supporters Union', however one of Sue Taylor's (Rogan's wife) relatives worked as a lawyer and advised the group to abandon the word union to avoid being subject to trade union laws and instead be known as an 'association', or as Taylor put it, 'Let's be the FA, with a big fucking S in the middle of it'.

One week later, Garrett and Reid travelled down to London to represent the small informal network under the name of the FSA for the BBC *Newsnight* debate. This Merseyside friendship network, which had felt the impact of Heysel on the people within the city, were, through the *Guardian* piece and *Newsnight* debate, able to connect a collective sense of social unrest amongst thousands of football supporters across different demographics about their relationship with the game. In doing so, this small Kop network had triggered a wider subjective strain felt by supporter networks and communities in the wake of the strong state and crisis of the mid-1980s (King, 1998) and began to channel this in the form of a movement which embodied an egalitarian and socially democratic message.

The American sociologist Herbert Blumer (1951) offered an explanation of how collective behaviour and social movements form. Whilst his work, particularly the focus upon strains and unrest creating elementary forms of social behaviour and interaction by people who are 'psychologically unstable', has been widely critiqued by scholars of social movements, it nonetheless offers a useful insight into the process of collective groupings. I argue that three of his mechanisms are particularly appropriate for explaining the ways in which Taylor and Garrett, through their own networks, began the informal and formal

connecting of both politicised and friendship supporter networks, or what Blumer referred to as 'collective enterprises'. These are: (1) agitation, (2) esprit de corps, and (3) the development of morale. In applying these throughout the chapter, I begin by noting that they are not specific to August 1985, rather are utilised at various points to analyse how the Kop network and forming of the FSA was to some extent successful in giving shape and direction to other fans, who channelled Taylor's letter in the direction of protest, and forming of regional FSA branches.

Firstly, to achieve this, the Kop network were responsible for 'agitating' others by getting 'under their skin' to inspire emotional reactions to the social problems supporters faced during the mid to late 1980s. Blumer notes, agitation seeks to jar people loose from their customary ways of thinking and believing, and to have aroused within them new impulses and wishes' (1969, p.104). However, it was clear that Blumer had individual agitators in mind (Edwards 2014) and whilst Taylor and Garrett began the process of turning grievance construction into a form of collective action, I argue, as will become clear throughout the chapter, that Blumer underplayed the importance of indigenous social networks, resources and relationships from which agitation emerges relationally.

One month later in September 1985, this network produced the first ever FSA newsletter typed by Garrett at Belle Valle police station. In it, they listed the names and telephone numbers of Garrett (FSA secretary), Sue Taylor (Membership Secretary) and Rogan Taylor, Maggie Reid, Mark Goulbourne and Tony Russell, the originator of a fan group called *Supporters United* from Reading. Russell had met the Merseyside network in August having learned of the FSA, and in realising that the two groups were beginning to share membership and common aims, it was proposed that they amalgamate under the FSA banner. This captured the network's intention to communicate and connect fans beyond traditional club-based supporter groups, like those within the NFFSC. As Garrett noted:



What divided fans for 90 minutes on a Saturday afternoon was far less than what united them more broadly, in terms of ticket prices, the kick off times being changed etc.

Peter Garrett (personal interview, 14 March 2016)

The September newsletter documented three initial mobilisations. Firstly, it reinforced the importance of social networks and resources. Both Taylor and Garrett had connections to ITV and Radio Mersey. Taylor's relationship with Gary Imlach, who during the 1980s worked as a sports reporter on the national breakfast television programme, *TV-AM*, and whose father Stuart played professional football during the 1950s and 60s, was instrumental in both helping Taylor understand how to communicate effectively when speaking on television and to achieve wider media exposure. Meanwhile, Garrett's connection to Alan Jackson at Radio Mersey helped the FSA communicate details of early meetings on Merseyside, not only to fans of Liverpool and Everton, but also students studying at the city's university. The newsletter noted how Taylor's *TV-AM* connection had given them 'excellent coverage' and that he'd also appeared on Radio 2 and 4 and the BBC show *Breakfast Time* presented by *Save our Soccer* presenter Emlyn Hughes, the former Liverpool captain. The previous evening, both Emlyn Hughes and Terry Neill, the ex-manager of Arsenal became members of the FSA. These networks were important in helping the FSA connect to the wider public through various media channels (Rosie and Gorrage, 2009; Stanyer and Wring, 2000; Swank, 2000). In doing so, Taylor became a 'broker' between the FSA and both local and national media outlets. Secondly, it captured the call for fans to recruit new members by word of mouth and by writing to local clubs with the view to featuring the FSA in the match programme. And finally, it communicated plans to establish the first ever formal Merseyside branch on Monday 30 September at the Albert pub on Lark Lane in Liverpool and the hosting of the inaugural Annual General Meeting in late October.

Scholars of social movements have also considered the world of symbolic meaning by how activists come to see themselves and collective action and in doing so, suggest we need to ‘know about the ideas of activists, their interpretation and definition of the situation and the meaning they attach to things in the world around them’ (Edwards 2014, p.92). Throughout these three empirical chapters, I show how ideologies and meanings adapt across various networks and temporalities, however this first newsletter began the process of collective action framing, and captured a sense of aligning a frame or idea central to the FSA, with the ordinary, everyday frames of wider football supporter networks during the social and political changes of the mid to late 1980s. Benford (1993) argued that to achieve this, activists’ try to ‘package’ or ‘present’ ideas in a convincing and culturally resonant way. In September 1985, the FSA presented itself as wanting to ‘*Reclaim the Game!*’ (FSA Newsletter, 1985). Four years later, ‘*Reclaim the Game*’ became the title of the national FSA newspaper, resembling what Blumer (1969) referred to as the formation of group ideology.

#### ‘WHEN SATURDAY COMES, WE’RE ALL JUST FOOTBALL FANS’

By the time Garrett had typed the second FSA newsletter in November 1985, the organisation had established three regional branches and began to concentrate efforts on developing a national network. These emerged in Merseyside, North Yorkshire and Glasgow, chaired by Ray O’Brien, Frank Ormston, editor of the York City fanzine *Terrace Talk*, and Nigel Grant. The naming of branches by region was considered important because it stressed that the organisation was not specific to any one club. Three months later in February 1986, the FSA had established five regional branches, the two additions being West Yorkshire and London, chaired by Joe Connor and Craig Brewin. After graduating from the University of Portsmouth in 1981, Brewin, a Leicester City supporter and active

member of the Labour Party, moved to London after securing employment with the Greater London Council when studying accountancy. At university, Brewin had been involved in various student based campaigns, and after a few years of work and study he began ‘actively looking for things to get involved in’. It was at this point when Brewin read Taylor’s letter in the Guardian:

This is post-Heysel, and anyone who was a football fan or who went to football was affected by Heysel and the coverage of it, and the studio debates which were coming out from the people who were just .... I mean to be fair to them, they were ex-footballers suddenly being asked to comment on quite complex issues, but those sort of discussions were setting the debate really and I think me like a lot of other people got angry and then when I read Rogan’s letter saying we need to stand up and allow supporters to have a voice, I thought yeah, I could do that, I could help organise something in London.

Craig Brewin, (personal interview, 31st March 2017).

In responding to the letter, Brewin spoke to the *Association of Provincial Football Supporters’ Clubs* in London (APFSCIL) which, having formed during the mid-1970s, grew from a handful of supporters groups, primarily consisting of supporters of non-London clubs living in the capital. During the 1980s, APFSCIL formed a close relationship with the NFFSC through leading figures such as NFFSC chair Ian Todd, and secretary Monica Hartland. By connecting with APFSCIL, Brewin was able to quickly establish a strong network of people concerned with national but also club-specific issues at Charlton Athletic, Tottenham Hotspur and Queens Park Rangers, and like Garrett, used the resources of his employer, in this case posting regional FSA newsletters through the council mail, to communicate and network with other supporters. The growth of the London regional network supported the work of Snow et al. (1980) who found that activist recruitment channels often centred upon participants becoming involved by way of prior social ties such as friendships formed through other activities they were involved in. Brewin noted how two Charlton supporters would turn up to a regional branch meeting, and then would

bring twenty people with them to the next meeting, and that this would be replicated across many of the club-specific networks.

The importance of prior social ties was also evident within Brewin's local network at the Greater London Council. One of his colleagues Andrew Collins had joined the FSA because of a personal friendship with Adrian Goldberg, an English journalist, radio and TV presenter from Birmingham. Goldberg, a West Bromwich Albion supporter held a degree in English from the University of Birmingham, and during the mid-1980s co-created the football fanzine called *Off the Ball* with Steve Beauchampé. Beauchampé was particularly influenced by the mixing of football and punk via the Scottish fanzine *Sick as a Parrot* and had been in various bands with Goldberg across Birmingham during the early 1980s. The FSA newsletter in December 1986 captures this mutually influencing relationship noting how 'the formation of the FSA had coincided with the appearance of a number of new alternative football magazines for a flourishing market amongst concerned fans'. Recognising this, the FSA gladly offered 'wholehearted support to these publications to give voice to the feelings of grass-roots supporters'. In doing so, it noted amongst their favorites, were, *Off the Ball*, *When Saturday Comes* (WSC), *Terrace Talk*, *Orienteer*, *City Gent* and *Wanderers Worldwide*. Earlier that year, the February newsletter offered a plug and subscription advertisement for *Off the Ball* noting the FSA's personal thanks to Adrian Goldberg for the fanzine's enthusiastic coverage.

Beauchampé and Brewin captured a sense of what began connecting people across the regional FSA branches and fanzines:

It was shared values and a shared view of the issues football fans were facing which you wouldn't just stumble upon; a shared view of the world, a shared sense of outrage to some extent, that football was clearly at a turning point, it was struggling, crowds were low, most of us had started going to football in the 70s so we all grew up with the hooligan culture which many didn't like and felt the government approach was punishing all football fans, for me the same way they were treating the miners - that as a group they are all the same, they are a problem, and this was beginning to alienate people and many of us felt that actually supporters were the solution not the problem

Craig Brewin, (personal interview, 31 March 2017).

As football fans we were caught in the middle, between issues of hooliganism and criminality at games, which we were also potentially the victims of, and on the other side was the authoritarian response of the authorities which restricted our freedoms going to football, and potentially put us in danger

Steve Beauchampé, (personal interview, 16 February 2018)

One of the most important ways of communicating this sense of collective identity was through the football fanzine movement. For Brewin, they were ‘tapping into the same sorts of issues as us (the FSA), but in some ways they had more power to do it’. Interestingly, the creators of WSC Mike Ticher and Andy Lyons met Taylor and Garrett at the Flat Iron pub in Liverpool in 1985 and attended an FSA public meeting at the University of London in early 1986. Consequently, they published the first edition of WSC in March that year, and according to Brewster (1993, p.15), ‘sold a healthy number of copies to the members of the embryo FSA’. In doing so, they formed a mutually influencing relationship with the fanzine often reporting on the FSA, whilst the FSA’s *Reclaim the Game* newsletter and magazine used the fanzine as a recruitment tool.

I was peripherally involved in the FSA for about a year I think but it was a loose relationship which benefited both of us, we publicised FSA meetings and it also helped plug us into a network of like-minded people

(Ticher, personal email, 2 February 2018).

It is important to recognise that whilst the early riser agitators of the FSA and football fanzines played a key role in connecting people, ideas and resources, they cannot be explained by reference to any one issue. Rather the growth of regional FSA branches around club-specific networks and club-based fanzines reflect the heterogeneity of supporter networks. However, they helped form important solidarity networks whereby fans (and their own social networks) could share incentives (for action) and achieve a sense of external consensus (della Porta and Diani, 1999). Moreover, these indigenous social networks, already possessed a rich array of resources which helped the FSA and fanzines

communicate, make decisions, and create networks of trust and reciprocity' (Edwards 2014, p.58). The presence of a 'literature', particularly in the form of *Off the Ball*, *WSC*, and *Reclaim the Game* helped communicate those ideas constitutive of the politicisation of football fandom, to inspire, provoke and arouse dissatisfaction (Blumer, 1969).

According to Beauchampé:

Goldberg always had an agenda for the magazine, I think he was just a bit more politically clued into what was happening in football, so he always saw it as being part of some kind of movement and the natural thing was to go out and start making connections

Beauchampé, (personal interview, 16 February 2018).

Moreover, acting as a form of 'activist media' and 'network broadcasting', these connections were to some extent influential in providing channels whereby *Reclaim the Game* as a movement frame could be diffused to a wider population (Andrews and Biggs, 2006, Hedstrom, 1994; Hedstrom Sandel and Stern, 2000; Ohlemacher 1996; Oliver and Myers, 2003; Krinsky and Crossley, 2013). This frame echoes King's (1998) critique of new football writing as an imaginary construction founded upon certain political understandings and informed by the transformation of football during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

One of the FSA's most important achievements was to draw on the resources of those within regional networks to build relationships with football clubs, the media, and other stakeholders in the game. Aronowitz (2003) and della Porta and Diani (1999) argued that many of the 'formal' or 'soft' leaders within movements often emerge from the 'new middle classes' or hold high levels of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986; 1990). And Cleland et al. (2018) draw on Florida's concept of the 'creative class' to recognise the role of people working in education, arts, music and entertainment' in creating new ideas, technology and content, which often requires some form of higher education. The FSA early riser agitators

drew upon various skills, resources and capital to establish these relationships. In the case of Garrett, the perception of injustice felt by thousands of supporters during the 1980s was further fuelled by his own police officer network. Many of Garrett's colleagues also policed football matches at Anfield and Goodison Park and during one briefing from the football inspectors, he recalled feeling that the control measures being proposed were excessive:

Who is it we're trying to control? Because when I'm not on duty, I'm one of them, my mate who's a solicitor, he's one of them, my mate who's a PhD student, he's one of them.

Garrett (personal interview, 14 March 2016)

Garrett used his social capital to meet a local Chief Superintendent who had recognised that supporters were not being properly represented. This helped him establish the FSA in Liverpool in terms of getting recognition from Liverpool FC, where the chair of the Merseyside Council Police Committee, Sydney Moss, was also the vice-chair of the club. Garrett would often visit Moss at his home to update him on community policing in the local Woolton area, however in doing so, kept his position as FSA secretary covert. During a local council meeting which Garrett and Taylor had been invited to represent the views of the FSA, Moss spotted Garrett and in learning of his involvement, informed him that Peter Robinson, the chief executive of Liverpool F.C. had also become aware of the FSA. From that one relationship and interaction, Garrett received a telephone call from Robinson informing him that the board of Liverpool would offer the FSA their full support and in doing so, became the start of regular meetings between the Kop FSA network and the club. For Garrett,

You get nothing done .... It's not what you know it's who you know, and in some cases, it's who you know and not what you're asking them, but what they think of you.

Garrett (personal interview, 14 March 2016)

Another way in which positive relationships between the FSA and specific club chairmen and secretaries developed was through individual members at regional branches raising particular complaints or issues. As Brewin noted, many clubs had lacked an active supporter presence or representation beyond the passive nature of the more socially conservative NFFSC, and thus the FSA by being more of a campaigning group was able to fill this gap with an effective informal structure. Moreover, both the local and national radio and print media 'were desperate for the supporters view, but didn't have any supporter contacts' and so relationships were formed which resulted in the FSA developing a profile 'well beyond its status very early on'.

As I sat watching Grandstand on Saturday 15 April 1989, Rogan Taylor and Peter Garrett were at Hillsborough, both as Liverpool supporters and the national chair and membership secretary of the FSA. Craig Brewin was now an FSA officer in the role of national secretary and Adrian Goldberg was the chair of the West Midlands branch. The FSA had seventeen regional branches, a constitution and a national committee with a clearly defined mission; 'to become the recognised representative body for football supporters in the UK'. However, whilst awareness of the association was high and attitudes generally favourable within the media and other official bodies, they recognised that supporter perception was still sketchy with most asking, 'why should they join?' (*FSA Marketing Strategy*, 1989). Despite only having approximately 5,000 members at its height in 1988/89 (Ruben, 1993), the FSA, through its campaigning on a range of collective and club-specific issues, most notably the *Anti-ID Card*, *Back to Europe*, and *Left on the Shelf* campaigns, had become important in re-defining public perceptions of football supporters as an articulate group with constructive ideas, genuine concerns and a right to be consulted on major issues within the game' (Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research at the University of Leicester, 2002).



On the 30 April at Wyken Working Men's Club in Coventry, the FSA hosted a special national committee meeting in response to Hillsborough. Brewin asked whether the FSA was prepared to take additional motions for the national conference agenda to be held at Sheffield United Football Club on 24 June. One of the motions agreed stated that 'football clubs should not make precipitative decisions concerning the conversion of terracing to seats until after the results of the Taylor inquiry were known and in any case, not without full consultation with their supporters'. And tellingly, that the 'FSA rejects the calls for all-seated football grounds'. This was the first public statement made by the FSA in advance of the publication of the final Taylor report the following year.

As I have already remarked, the period from 1985-1990 witnessed some of the most significant changes both in the political economy and cultural fabric of professional football. The cultural and political environments in which the FSA operated during this period, however, were not static, consisting of immovable structures, rather were 'external relational fields' (Goldstone, 2004), comprising of 'symbolic and discursive spaces in which strategic interactions' between FSA networks and other players, such as the government, national and local media, corporate stakeholders and the public took place (Edwards 2014, p.240). As a result, these relational networks and relationships operated in environments which provided new opportunities for mobilisation as well as placing constraints on their action. The chapter turns to consider the evolution of these networks and relationships from 1989 and how they were important in connecting people across both local and national spaces to form various protests and campaigns against the all-seating legislation post-Hillsborough.

## STRUCTURING COLLECTIVE ACTION: CHANGING ROLES AND POSITIONS

In the summer of 1989, Rogan Taylor received a telephone call from the University of Leicester offering him a fellowship within its Centre for Football Research. The connection between Taylor and the Department of Sociology at Leicester dates back to an FSA newsletter in December 1986 which informed members of an academic report being published by the football researcher and Liverpool supporter, John Williams, for the *Football Trust* on the banning of away supporters at Luton town's Kenilworth Road stadium. As an FSA member, Williams attended the national conference in 1988 at Tottenham Hotspur's stadium, White Hart Lane, and was part of a small network including Adrian Goldberg, Simon Inglis, Susan Wells and Steve Pinder, who led five workshops covering policing, fanzines, grounds and facilities, the media and hooliganism. One year later, Williams attended the special FSA national council meeting in Coventry in the wake of the Hillsborough disaster and volunteered to convene the meeting of the FSA sub-group at Leicester. As co-director of the football research centre, Williams was actively involved in the academic debate on the government's *Football Members Bill*. Whilst the FSA had struggled to attract mass membership, the relational networks had connected people with high levels of cultural capital. Taylor was worn out, especially after the emotional strain that Hillsborough had put him under, and thus the national conference at Sheffield in 1989 was his last as chair. During his time at Leicester, Taylor published two books titled '*Football and its Fans*' (1992) and '*Kicking and Screaming*' (1998). However, for the next couple of years, he remained informally active with the FSA in the role of 'campaign coordinator'.

By March 1990, the FSA had 22 regional branches with a core national network comprising of national officials and five elected representatives to sit on the management committee with specialised roles to assist decision making. These were the National Secretary (Martin Jones), Treasurer (Mark Goulbourn), Membership Secretary (Peter

Garrett) and Vice Chair (Nigel Grant). These individuals were supported by Craig Brewin (who was responsible for strategy), Chris Wright (Branch Liaison), Sarah Truscott (AGM organiser), Mark Wilson (Secretary to the Management Committee) and Sheila Spiers (Administration). Whilst it would be inaccurate to theorise the FSA in 1990, as what McCarthy and Zald (1973) term a professional social movement organisation, some of the central players were recognising the challenges of bureaucratisation. Various minutes from FSA council and management committee meetings during 1989-1991 revealed not only a further decline in membership (down to 3,500 in January 1991) and the difficulty in attracting women and various ethnic minority groups, but a perceived need to increase the membership fee to £5 for 2 years. Additionally, the cost of producing *Reclaim the Game* had created a shortfall of £1,580 which led to the FSA increasing the cover price to 40p. Finally, there was a disagreement as to whether *Reclaim the Game* conveyed the 'right image' with some members suggesting it did 'not automatically link with football in the minds of purchasers' (FSA marketing strategy, 1989). According to Snow et al. (1986, p.473), sometimes, 'new frames may have to be planted and nurtured, old meanings or understandings jettisoned and erroneous beliefs or "mis-framings" reframed'. On 24th September 1989, *Reclaim the Game* became *The Football Supporter* framed as 'by supporters for supporters'.

Both Nigel Grant and Tony Goulbourn were encouraged by Taylor to stand for election as chair of the FSA in July 1989. Grant had set up the Scotland Branch in 1986 and had been vice-chair for a couple of years, whilst Goulbourn, an Evertonian, and the brother of Mark, was also one of the Merseyside agitators who'd helped form the organisation in 1985. Living in Sheffield, Tony Goulbourn who at that time was working as a senior civil servant for Manpower Services Commission, was active in setting up the South Yorkshire branch, and after Nigel Grant decided to withdraw his nomination, Goulbourn was elected chair on 30th July 1989. Like Garrett, it was the perception of

football supporters within his work-related social networks which motivated Goulbourn to become active within the organisation. This is important because it moves beyond a structuralist reading of social ties being themselves the basis for movement recruitment, rather relationally captures how prior ties only encourage activism when there is a strong identification with a particular identity (McAdam and Paulsen, 1993). Goulbourn expressed this identity amplification noting how:

In Sheffield, most of the people I knew ... you didn't talk football to them because in fact if it implied you were keen football fan then they thought you were somehow unclean as it were ... and Heysel reinforced that and the whole question of Identity Cards and so on and so forth.

Tony Goulbourn, (personal interview 20 June, 2016).

Goulbourn also held the position of CEO for Barnsley and Doncaster TEC which was a Quango designed to improve business leadership for local economic development. Consequently, he had connections to the chairmen of both Barnsley and Doncaster Rovers Football Club. However, this role ultimately led Goulbourn to reduce his involvement with the FSA a couple of years later as he began to be perceived by the leader of Barnsley Council as a 'bit of a politician'.

At the FSA's fifth annual conference in June 1990 at Birmingham University, Brewin argued that the 'management committee was becoming too powerful', and successfully stood against Goulbourn for election as chair, promising to distribute more power back to the FSA council. According to Goulbourn, this election was important because with the World Cup in Italy 1990 on the immediate horizon, the organisation was attracting a lot of interest amongst fans, journalists, and local politicians. As a result, the FSA received a lot of money which provided new opportunities and challenges. For example, by encouraging people with financial skills, including a US-based sponsor, to be more involved, Goulbourn was able to raise £25,000 for the first football fan embassy at a World Cup. However, inevitably this meant that for some, the FSA had to 'be more careful,

with how they accounted for their money’, whilst others saw Goulbourn as a more ‘conservative’ force. Goulbourn perceived this to cause a ‘north/south’ divide within the organisation which saw the southern branches support Brewin at the election. There seemed to be some disparity between Goulbourn and Brewin’s perception as to the extent to which the FSA became politicised during 1990. Goulbourn recognised the challenge of managing a disparate group of people (of varying social classes) at a time where more politically minded and resourced individuals (such as ex-counsellors) were being recruited. Contrarily, Brewin felt most people involved had no previous involvement in politics but did recognise that because the UK had a Conservative government, more opposition MP’s were keen to talk and that the average political leaning of FSA members was ‘probably to the left’:

This did cause a bit of a problem on Merseyside because some had been involved with the far left such as Militant Tendency, particularly in Manchester, and Sheila (from Liverpool) hated that there was militant or ex militant members in the FSA, and she would ring me complaining about these people, because of her experience of Militant.

Craig Brewin (personal interview, 31 March, 2017)

Nash (2001) argued that many ‘traditional’ football supporters saw the FSA as ‘left-wing and middle class’, however it is clear from this data collected that the core networks had a complex mix of politics and the bureaucracy of politics. In 1990, Goulbourn, felt there was a perception that the focus of the FSA had been ‘too Liverpool centred’ and that the ‘London and the Manchester lads’ wanted to change that. Likewise, Brewin expressed that whilst fans connected across some shared values, ultimately the FSA was founded on Merseyside around ‘Merseyside issues’ which may have resulted in ‘some people from Liverpool seeing themselves as more important’. As chair, Brewin also believed that there was too much obsession with the administration and internal management of the FSA which

conflicted with his view that it should have a relatively loose framework within which everyone operated.

The various interactions between supporter organisations and the strategic players encountered, such as the FA, the FLA, ACPO, the Football League and the UK government, were demonstrating that constraints on what could be achieved came from the heterogeneity of other actors and networks, often with some different – as well as competing – goals and interests (Duyvendak and Jasper, 2015). These challenges were articulated in the publication of the FSA *Supporters' Blueprint* (1991) as a response to the FA's own *Blueprint for the Future of Football*. In 1991, the FA in recognising the work of the FSA and football fanzines to campaign for a greater role in the game for 'non-hooligans, and establishing a new climate of greater mutual tolerance and respect among rival supporters', recommended the establishment of a national supporters' organisation (NSO) with regional councils. And argued that a member of the NSO should be appointed to the FLA and included in appropriate liaison meetings with the FA, FL, the police, central government and other relevant bodies. This would have a national budget of £100,000 and would fund four full-time employees and an office. This recommendation published in *Chapter 3: Football Spectators and Football Spectator Behaviour* was written by the Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research at the University of Leicester, whose position was clarified in WSC by John Williams and Rogan Taylor.

However, the FSA's response during Brewin's chairmanship, outlined a number of criticisms which centred upon the rejection of "replacing" the current FSA, and arguing that supporter organisations should be independent of the football authorities. What these publications did achieve was to highlight the heterogeneity of various roles and functions within supporter campaigns which encompassed both local and national based issues. Furthermore, they reflected the opportunities but also challenges of building a unified supporters' organisation during a period in which a culture of ISAs was beginning to

emerge in London, where the FSA branch was too large and ‘diverse to tackle club specific issues alone’ (*FSA Supporters’ Blueprint*, 1991). Nonetheless, in 1991, both the FSA and NFFSC passed motions supporting the establishment of a joint working party to discuss closer co-operation and to examine the possibility of merging the two organisations in the future.

#### ‘MARCHING ALTOGETHER’: LEEDS AND MANCHESTER ACADEMIC NETWORKS

Brewin remained chair of the FSA throughout 1991 supported by David Lee, who replaced Tony Goulbourn as newly elected vice-chair. Lee, a Derby County supporter and journalist in his early-twenties, was part of a small fanzine network which set up the Teeside branch of the FSA in 1989. This network which included Antony Vickers and Will Hagerty, used their cultural capital to gain access to the chairman of Middlesbrough, and the managers of Hartlepool, Darlington and Sunderland in order to build relationships between the clubs and ‘alienated’ disparate groups of local supporters. As fanzine writers, they were concerned with the working class consumption of the game (King, 1998, p.185) through opposition to aspects of the new consumption of football ‘which went against their social democratic sensibilities’. Whilst Hagerty now works as head of publishing at the *Sun* newspaper, and Vickers as senior Boro writer and blogger for the *Middlesbrough Gazette*, they collectively created the Boro fanzine *Get a Grip* during the late 1980s and wrote a specific FSA related column in the now thirty year old *Fly Me to The Moon* (FMTTM). Moreover, both the original and contemporary editor of FMTTM, Andy Smelt and Robert Nichols, have also been involved with the FSA.

In 1991, the FSA started to develop what it considered a practical response to the Taylor Report by setting up a working party, led by David Lee, to co-ordinate activities,

specifically in wake of the previous year's conference motion on *Safe Terracing*. Lee had previously written to all FSA members one year earlier on 16 January 1990 as secretary of the Teesside branch, highlighting emerging tensions at Middlesbrough as a result of the club converting a popular standing area known locally as the 'chicken run' to all-seating. The club argued they had been advised that they should implement Lord Taylor's interim timetable regarding all-seater grounds at a rate dictated by the council. Lee argued that the 'FSA should campaign against all-seating because failure to do so would result in many fans being forced away from British football permanently. This became the basis for the first documented small-scale FSA led 'standing' campaign titled *Stand Up For Your Right to Stand Up*, which centred upon a report of the government's Home Affairs Committee into the Taylor Report and all-seating legislation. By acknowledging that it may not be appropriate for third and fourth division clubs to abandon terracing completely, Lord Taylor inadvertently provided a political opportunity for the FSA to begin petitioning at local clubs and collect signatures for the 'creation of safe terracing in new stadium developments' (*FSA letter*, 23 January 1991). Lee recalled the 'strain' felt by some within the FSA at that time:

You know, you went round, during the early 90s, there was some pretty ropery stuff, I think Hillsborough was a wakeup call for all of us in the football supporters movement, we sort of realised there were massive issues there to address and I think the Taylor Report coinciding around the time the debate about the Super League was emerging as well, everything got a bit wrapped up in that and that whole idea of the gentrification of football, you know, there wasn't much of a mature debate about whether or not what was proposed in terms of all-seater stadia was inherently safer.

David Lee (personal interview, 26 June 2017).

In the letter sent to FSA members, Lee stressed that the focus of the campaign was not 'luddite' or 'backward-looking' but concerned with 'freedom of choice'. Whilst he argued that the FSA were not fighting for a 'mythical golden age of football' nor were they 'against progress', the reference to 'retaining an essential part of football's culture' (standing terraces), nonetheless, supports King's (1998) critique of new football writing as having



germinated in the boyhood memories and experiences of young males and informed by imagined constructions of authenticity. In calling for a 'national protest day', the FSA sought to agitate a wider sense of social unrest post-Taylor and began to consider strategic interactions with local MP's who were also football fans. *Stand Up For Your Right To Stand Up* was used as an alternative frame of interpretation through 'rhetoric of change' (Gamson and Meyer, 1996), constructing a view of the reality of all-seater legislation by conveying the message that fans themselves could bring about change.

In 1992, Lee began working closely with FSA member John Tummon on developing a report into the *Preservation of Standing Accommodation at Football Grounds* which the FSA submitted to the Labour Party MP Roy Hattersley who was then shadow Secretary of State. Tummon, originally from Wolverhampton but based in Manchester, studied at the Polytechnic of North London and had a strong interest and involvement in left-wing politics. As a member of the FSA during the late 1980s, Tummon proposed the idea of having the sponsored international football fan embassy and doing so, became Beauchampé's deputy at Italia 90.

The FSA's three core arguments against all-seater legislation primarily focused on freedom of choice for supporters, the importance of loosely affiliated supporter networks and relationships, and opportunities to consult architects and structural engineers to design new 'safer' terraces. In doing so, they made it clear that they were not advancing an argument which depicted fans who wanted the choice of standing to remain as 'unreconstructed conservative boors' opposed to modernisation. Instead, the FSA wanted the FLA's powers to be adjusted so as to enforce the construction of an agreed minimum percentage of 'safe' terracing at every ground. And thus accepted that investment would be required to improve the provision of standing accommodation with safer entrances, stairways and gangways. One of the tactics adopted by the FSA was to target MPs who were part of a sport specific back bench committee. Lee recalled the difficulties faced:

I remember writing to people like Kate Hoey who was around then, and a guy called Alan Keen who was based in Burnley, we were identifying MP's who were football fans to get some degree of interest. And we got some interest from people in the Labour Party but there wasn't any great deal of support for what we were trying to say.

David Lee (personal interview, 26 June 2017)

For Lee, whilst the FSA did push the agenda and submitted the report to the relevant stakeholders such as the FA, FLA, and DCMS, 'the drive for change with all-seating was unstoppable' and thus they were unable 'to make a huge impact with the campaign' (interview notes, 26 June 2017).

By the end of 1993, Craig Brewin had left the FSA to raise a young family and David Lee was now chair, supported by Tim Whelan as vice-chair, who had been active in the FSA since 1988 as the East Midlands regional branch contact. The FSA membership had continued to fall (*FSA conference minutes*, 1992) and the number of regional branches had shrunk to nineteen (*FSA newsletter, issue 1*, 1993). After eight years, Peter Garrett had stood down as national membership secretary to remain active as a standard national committee member. The organisation began the process of creating a series of specialised roles within its National Committee framework such as 'Policing and Stewarding', 'Campaigns Coordinator', Premier League Liaison', 'Anti-Racism Strategy', 'Non-League Football' and 'Independent Supporters/Fanzine Liaison'. In doing so, it was able to recruit and connect members to its management structure and campaigning with important skills and resources, particularly through a strategy to combat racism in football.

Tummon's previous campaigning experience was an important resource to draw upon in July 1993 when the management committee began working on its anti-racism strategy. Supporting Tummon, was another academic and Crystal Palace supporter, Tim Crabbe, who had long held a concern about racism in the game stretching back to early experiences at matches in the 1970s and 1980s. In his second year as chair, David Lee

introduced Crabbe in the FSA newsletter as a new committee member who had been charged with the task of ensuring more work was done to combat racism by raising awareness via both local and national campaigning, built around co-operation between branches, anti-racist groups and supporters clubs. For Crabbe, this was a mutually influencing relationship:

As the topic emerged as an issue for the FSA at its 1993 conference and came to public prominence in the context of the *Let's Kick Racism Out of Football* campaign, I emerged as FSA lead in this area. It was through the campaigning on the issue that I became aware of an 'intellectual deficit' and lack of understanding of how racism was constructed in the game and in discussion with academics like Les Back I was encouraged to pursue a research agenda alongside the campaigning work. As this progressed, I think these parallel strands were probably mutually supportive.

Tim Crabbe, personal correspondence, 15th February, 2018).

In setting out the FSA campaign against racism in football, Crabbe highlighted the work of other fan networks particularly through various fanzines and campaigns such as *Celtic Fans Against Racism*, *United Against Racism* in Newcastle, *Foxes Against Racism* in Leicester and *Leeds United Against Racism and Fascism*. The Leeds campaign was particularly important because it formed a tie between the FSA West Yorkshire branch and the Leeds fanzine, *Marching Altogether* network, which included Paul Thomas and Alison Pilling. Thomas, a Professor of Youth and Policy at the University of Huddersfield has published widely on racism, youth work and education. However, his first peer reviewed paper published in 1995, drew upon his experiences at Leeds to offer a supporters view of the *Kicking Racism out of Football* movement. Thomas recounted how another Leeds supporter and journalist Phil Shaw, who was the assistant sports editor for the *Independent* newspaper, often featured the work of the FSA and fanzines in a regular Saturday morning column and it was this that introduced Thomas to Rogan Taylor. Shaw had previously worked at the Guardian from 1982-1986 as editor of *Soccer Diary* and was important in connecting WSC to a wider audience having written a lead story on its first issue (Brewster, 1993). That tie led the FSA to nominate *Marching Altogether* and their anti-racism

campaign for a monthly *Services to Soccer* award presented by TV-AM. Subsequently, Taylor met the Leeds network at Bramley Rugby League Club where the West Yorkshire branch was then formed (Interview notes, Thomas, 15th February 2018). The anti-racism campaigning during the 1993/1994 season created a Manchester network within the FSA.

Thomas recalled how:

Tim Crabbe and Adam Brown, who was then a PhD researcher at the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture and Manchester United fan pulled a meeting together over where Adam worked in Manchester, I can remember Graham Ennis from the Everton fanzine '*When Skies are Grey*' being there along with someone from the '*Foxes Against Racism*', and a couple of us went over from our fanzine and we ended up creating this free fanzine called the *United Colours of Football* and we wrote some articles between us, it was fans of different clubs working together using the FSA banner.

Paul Thomas (personal interview, 15 February 2018)

Four years earlier, Brewin had recognised the importance of trying to connect club specific fan networks to cross-club and national based issues. During the early 1990s some local fan networks formed ISAs such as the *Tottenham Independent Supporters Association* (TISA) and the *Hammers Independent Supporters Association* at West Ham. Whilst Brewin and Beauchampé worked closely with Tottenham fan networks involved with the *Left on the Shelf* campaign, it became clear as discussed in chapter 2, that many fans were more concerned with their own club specific issues (Nash, 2001). As a result, Brewin created the *Football Alliance Action Group* (FLAG) which sought to bring one or two emerging ISAs in London together with the support of the FSA. In 1993, ISAs were beginning to emerge across the UK, and Crabbe recognised the importance of building bridges and alliances with these club based networks evidenced by the FSA having an *Independent Supporters/Fanzine Liaison* position. This reflected the emerging interplay of the FSA, fanzines and ISAs and the role of the *Independent Supporters Association Communication and Coordination Network* (ISACCN) in enabling fanzines and ISAs to gain access to the FSA office and resources (*FSA Supporters' Blueprint*, 1991). Crabbe understood that 'it

would be hard for the FSA to become a mass movement given that football fans' passions and gripes are for the most part parochial':

My sense was that when the big cross cutting issues emerged (like Racism), it made sense to tap into a network with shared perspectives and the ability to connect with and mobilise supporters who might not otherwise have any motivation to get involved with the FSA. I had first-hand experience of how this could work through my leadership of the *United Colours of Football Initiative* which had lent on ISAs and fanzines for help in the distribution of materials in support of the *Let's Kick Racism out Of Football Campaign*.

Tim Crabbe (personal correspondence, 15 February 2018)

This connecting of people and shared resources is an example of relational group action involving actors across the FSA, ISAs and fanzines working together to achieve common goals (Cleland et al. 2018).

At the end of 1994, David Lee left the FSA and Tim Crabbe was elected chair. Adam Brown was now part of the FSA national committee as lead for '*Fanzines and the Media*' and Steve Beauchampé was planning the FSA's international role at Euro 96, the upcoming European Championships to be hosted by England in 1996. Brown began his PhD in 1991 looking at supporter organisations and in doing so became involved with the FSA at the Greater Manchester regional branch meetings, 'partly for research and partly out of a growing interest and involvement in fan politics' (personal correspondence, 8 March, 2018).

Scholars of social movements have examined the role of networks in providing channels to diffuse ideological content to unconnected actors through language framing (Krinsky and Crossley, 2013). To achieve this, some activists take on the role of 'broker' or 'bridge leader' (Robnett, 1997) in seeking to build coalition networks and this is often communicated through collective action and relational conventions. In this chapter, the data analysed demonstrated the importance of fanzines and FSA newsletters and magazines in creating culturally encoded standards and social norms (Melucci, 1995) inherent within the

politicisation of fandom and emerging culture of contestation across both FSA and ISA relational fields (Jary, Horne and Bucke, 1991). In 1995, Manchester United supporter and FSA member Adam Brown, as a public ‘bridge leader’, wrote a piece in the *Football Supporter* titled *Supporters United* which communicated the intention to build more structured links between ISAs and the FSA. Additionally, the FSA announced plans of a Sheffield meeting of various ISAs in WSC. For Brown, whilst ISAs had their own histories and concerns, the different backgrounds nonetheless held a common theme; the neglect and hostility towards fans’ interests. He listed the contact details of up to 31 ISAs and other forms of independent supporter campaigns and together with Crabbe, created a memo to FSA members titled *Learning to speak with one voice*. As chair, Crabbe had been approached by senior figures within the FA and Labour Party about the ‘possible benefits that would derive to football supporters from the existence of one national supporters’ organisation’ (*The Football Supporter*, 1995). Now ten years old, the FSA was again seeking to mobilise a breakthrough in the degree of involvement of supporters in the running of the game by ‘protecting the achievements of its organisation as well as accommodating the advantages that ISAs and Supporters Clubs had to offer.

## MILITANT NETWORKS AND COLLECTIVE EFFERVESCENCE: BUILDING A RELATIONAL COALITION OF FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS

In chapter 2, I drew upon King (1998) and Brown (1998) to examine the initial response of Manchester United supporters to the announcement of ticket price increases to pay for the reconstruction of the Stretford End in 1992. King captured the interplay of United fan networks, fanzines, the FSA and other ISAs at a public meeting at Lancashire County Cricket Club, which was attended by over 1,000 fans. In doing so, he discussed the role played by key individuals including Andy Mitten who was the editor of the fanzine, *United*

*We Stand* and a group of United season ticket holders led by Johnny Flacks and Peter Kenny in forming HOSTAGE. This became the focus of Brown's PhD and thus constituted a social tie to Flacks and his United fanzine network (Brown, personal correspondence, 8 March 2018). Flacks was also a member of the FSA and active within the Greater Manchester branch chaired by Mark Glynn, and in 1995 Flacks became the regional branch contact.

Scholars of social movements have examined how during the late twentieth century, old capital and labour conflicts were replaced by lifestyle and identity politics. Consequently, there has been a theoretical and empirical shift from old social movements to new, inspired by the cluster of movements which emerged during the 1960s such as the peace movement, second wave feminism and animal rights campaigns. The works of Jurgen Habermas (1987), Alain Touraine (1981) and Alberto Melucci (1985, 1996) are central to the theoretical development of NSM's. Habermas (1987) conceptualised NSM's as reactions to what he considered a 'colonisation of the lifeworld' evidenced by particular strains or grievances which emerge in post-industrial societies. Crossley (2002, p.158) argued this contains a 'process of juridification, whereby ever more areas of life become subject to legal regulation', and which, according to Habermas (1987), results in both a loss of freedom and meaning. For Habermas (1987) NSM's emerge as 'defensive reactions to economic and political interference in everyday life' and subsequently generate 'public debate about matters of public morality and social organisation, contesting the norms by which we live our lives' (Crossley 2002, p.161). Similarly, Melucci used the concept of 'submerged networks of everyday life' to explain the struggle of activists as a 'fight to regain control over the symbolic resources of information society', in order to reinvent themselves as new kinds of individuals (Edwards 2014, p.140). In doing so, groups come to develop a sense of 'who they are, who they are against and what the struggle is about' and this is key to understanding how collective identity is constructed (Edwards 2014).

King (2003) argued that the development of ISAs were an important example of NSM's, wherein a socially diverse group became united around one particular political issue concerned not with employment but consumption. In March 1995, during a match between Manchester United and Arsenal at Old Trafford, an announcement was broadcast over a large tannoy instructing United supporters in the K-Stand to remain seated or face eviction from the stadium. In response, thousands of fans across the whole stadium stood up in protest. And after the match, networked supporters met in the Gorse Hill pub in Stretford to discuss how to proceed (O'Neill, 2017). Whilst other relational campaigns such as *Left of the Shelf* at Tottenham (Cloake and Fisher, 2016) and *No Kop Seats* at Liverpool (Nevin, 2016) sought to protest against the installation of seats within popular terraces at White Hart Lane and Anfield, United supporters became increasingly frustrated at the perceived draconian actions of the club post-Taylor and the all-seater stadia legislation. Fanzine writers including Mitten (from *United We Stand*) and Chris Robinson (from *Red Issue*) used the local Manchester Piccadilly radio station's football talk show as a form of activist media to argue that collective action was needed to form an independent supporters organisation. The tannoy announcement had produced what Jasper (1997) referred to as the emotional 'moral shock' in precipitating social movement activity and represented the 'colonisation of the lifeworld' of K-standing supporters at Old Trafford in 1995 in the way in which fans were witnessing aspects of social life which used to be within their control taken away from them (Edwards, 2014). According to King (1998, p.163), this represented the 'final conjectural straw which was added to a much longer organic decline in the relationships between the lads and the club'.

A network of supporters with prior social ties met at a pub in Stretford and after a couple of meetings, a core group, primarily comprising of fanzine writers emerged which included Flacks, Mitten, Robinson, Brown, Dave Kirkwood, Richard Kurt, Mike Shepard, Steve Black, Peter Boyle, Andy Walsh and Mark Longden. This network helped form



IMUSA which was according to King (1998) informed by what constituted the appropriate consumption of football, namely a common experience imagined as both traditional and authentic working-class culture. Peter Boyle who was well known as a face on the Old Trafford terraces for often leading various football songs encouraged Andy Walsh to attend the meeting having known each other since they were fifteen:

I knew Boyle through the anti-poll tax campaign. Both he and I were jailed for non-payment and therefore I had spoken at rallies of tens of thousands of people and organised rallies of thousands of people and so organising a meeting needs some experience.

Andy Walsh (personal interview, 3 April 2017)

After a few meetings, Walsh's campaigning background became critically important in establishing himself as a 'soft' leader within IMUSA as a NSM. Drawing upon Castells' work, Hill et al. (2016) argue that 'soft' leaders are those who generally hold positions of social, political and/or cultural influence in the way they are able to communicate the aims and tactics of collective action (Cleland et al. 2018). One of the ways in which Walsh achieved this was through a 'programming' and 'switching' of IMUSA's networked practices (Castells 2015). As an ISA, IMUSA recognised the importance of relations between Manchester United fan networks, the FSA and the culture of fanzines to share, communicate and collaborate common goals and resources.

We saw the need to pull those different ISAs together; rather than just being in an FSA north west branch, there was a need for us to organise amongst Man United fans but then we wanted to talk to supporters of other clubs about the same sorts of issues they were facing so we set about establishing the Independent Supporters Network to start tackling directly common interests at different clubs.

Andy Walsh (personal interview, 3 April 2017)

Mark Longden, a Manchester United fan in his mid-thirties had been encouraged to attend the IMUSA meetings by his partner who was active within the Greater Manchester branch of the FSA. After a couple of months, Longden volunteered to help the core network by contacting various ISAs via particular fanzines which they felt were written with a

distinctive campaigning style. Additionally, some of those at IMUSA had prior political ties to the core leaders of specific ISAs at Newcastle and Southampton which are both analysed in Nash's research. The *Independent Newcastle United Supporters Association* (INUSA) was founded in June 1994 as a response to the club introducing a Bond scheme to finance the redevelopment of St James' Park. Two prominent members of the core INUSA network were the chair Kevin Miles and vice-chair John Regan. Nash (2000) and King (2003) noted that key organisational features of INUSA involved a particular political edge with Miles and other members of the core network having been active organisers for the Socialist Party and other anti-fascist and anti-racist campaigns. Similarly, at the *Southampton Independent Supporters Association* (SISA), central nodes within that network such as Perry McMillan and Richard Chorley (who both demonstrated characteristics of King's 'the lads' and new football writing), had also been active in union politics (McMillan, field notes, 22 January 2016). These prior political ties were important according to Longden:

There had been attempts to get this ISA network going in the past and there were a few loose contacts knocking about and some had dried up and packed it in and so Walsh said do you fancy seeing if you can get this going and contacting other clubs and see what they've got to say, and see if they want to get involved and that's where it all started when I got in touch with Kev (Miles) at INUSA .... You see fanzines were important but a lot of them (also referring to McMillan and Chorley) had all been involved in Militant, and it was through that .... Everybody knew each other through Militant, they'd been on anti-Poll Tax riots and all that ... that's where it came from.

Mark Longden (personal interview, 24 January 2018)

During the mid to late 1990s, McMillan was both chair of SISA and the South Coast regional branch of the FSA. Additionally, he was a regular contributor to the Southampton fanzine *The Ugly Inside* with a personalised column titled *Perry on the Left Wing* which always began with *Greetings Comrades* capturing his trade union campaigning background and commitment to socialist politics. McMillan recalled how:

Other Militant activists like ‘Milesy’ (Kevin Miles) and ‘Walshy’ (Andy Walsh) were important because they too had been involved with the anti-poll tax campaign and used football as a medium to communicate collective ideas about how ‘capitalism had come into football’ and the need for a ‘trade union for fans’.

Perry McMillan (personal interview, 22 January 2016)

One of the key influences on McMillan was the Socialist Party’s (formerly Militant) publication *Reclaim the Game* (first published in 1992 by John Reid) which argued that the Premier League would drive ‘working class fans away from the game and possibly lead in the long-term to the death of many clubs’. McMillan referred to the *Militant’s Football Charter* as his ‘manuscript to work with’ which ‘openly opposed all-seated stadia and the imposition of bond schemes’. Ironically, it was through Sky Sports’ publicity of SISAs ‘red card’ campaign against then manager Ian Branfoot, which according to McMillan, acted as the catalyst for those ties within IMUSA to formally contact SISA seeking campaigning advice.

The political story of the Militant Tendency, known internally as the ‘Revolutionary Socialist League’ (RSL) is discussed by the journalist and Manchester United supporter, Michael Crick in his book ‘Militant’ (2016). In it, Crick captures how the formidable organisational and speaking skills acquired during years in the RSL led some former members (including Walsh and Miles) to achieve considerable success since leaving the tendency. King (2003) noted how Crick himself was part of a Manchester Grammar school alumni network which formed *Shareholders United against Murdoch* (SUAM) to further complement the campaigning work of IMUSA (Brown and Walsh, 1999). Miles in particular had a strong communications background having been the elected ‘communications officer’ in the ‘All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation’ (*Socialist Party*, 1990). Both Walsh and Miles were important in mobilising cooperation and trust amongst some leading ISA networks during the mid to late 1990s in a way which was characteristic of other solidarity mobilisations during the 1980s. Barker (2001) noted how these were

often rooted in small dense core networks of independent labor activists that had lain low for nearly 10 years after the repression of Communist strikes in 1970 (Krinsky and Crossley 2013, p. 7). To achieve this, Walsh and Miles with the leading support and backing of IMUSA, INUSA, the *Sheffield United Supporters Association* (BIFA), the FSA and WSC, helped ‘broker’ the national meeting of ISAs as documented in Brown’s FSA newsletter column, in order to facilitate intra-movement communication and raise a common agenda by learning from each other’s experience (Brown, 1996). Castells (2011) describes these individuals as ‘switchers’ who have the power to connect and ensure cooperation of different networks in protest by forming new coalitions. Collectively, Walsh, Miles and Howard Holmes of BIFA with the backing of their own ISAs and the FSA, wrote a letter to various supporter groups to communicate plans of a proposed agenda for establishing more formal links between them (ISA letter published in *IMUSA Newsletter*, August 1995).

According to King (2003), by the mid-1990s the FSA had become more or less defunct as a political organisation because in a deregulated environment, most masculine fans were unified by club specific issues and years of close association. Furthermore, as Brown noted, whilst the three influential United fanzines, *Red Issue*, *United We Stand* and *Red News*, were mostly very supportive of the FSA and crucial in setting the cultural-political agenda, there was amongst some United supporters, an anti-FSA strand based on the perception of it being a ‘Liverpool thing’ (Brown, personal correspondence, 20th March, 2018). Whilst my research into the FSA as an organisation supports King’s research, some of the networks involved did overlap on issues which were informed by a socially democratic message. In doing so, coalitions like the ISA national network emerged and switchers like Walsh and Miles were important in developing a convention based upon shared claim-making across issues such as pricing structures, away ticket allocations, restrictions on away fans travelling to matches and establishing anti-racism agendas

(IMUSA *Newsletter*, August 1995). For Krinsky (2007), social movements often ‘spill over’, and the coalitions formed operate on a continuum from uncoordinated to fully coordinated action. Furthermore, Krinsky and Crossley (2013) argue that what matters is not just the presence of a tie, but its content and patterns. The content and patterns of IMUSA, INUSA, the FSA and fanzine ties were characterised by what King (2003) referred to as the forming of an important alliance between the ‘lads’ and fanzine writers and their textured pattern of resistance to and consent with the new consumption of football. For Longden:

We (members of his own IMUSA network) were the foot soldiers, and Walshy and Brown were the brains behind everything.

Mark Longden (personal interview? 20 February 2015).

Similarly, for Walsh, his relational tie to Adam Brown was characterised as:

Adam was another “tube of glue” if you like, because of the research he was doing, his own PhD and his ongoing research at Manchester Metropolitan University and the people he knew, like Steve Redhead and the editor of *WSC*, he was going round the country and making all these connections and the fact that he was part of the IMUSA network meant that our connections were much quicker.

Andy Walsh (personal interview, 3 April 2017)

This complex alliance was also important according to Longden and Walsh in establishing trust amongst the ISA networks. As a switcher, Walsh was successful in pulling together a meeting of supporters from United, Everton, Leeds, Manchester City, and Liverpool on ‘neutral ground’ near Bolton Wanderers’ Reebok stadium (Interview notes from Walsh). Longden recalled how these North West fan networks were seeking to form an alliance under the name of the *Premier League Action Committee* (PLAC) which brought together some ‘well known lads from the terraces’:

They weren’t dickheads off the internet, they were actual faces who were at the games who people respected and who match going away fans would look up to.

Mark Longden (personal interview, 24 January 2018)

Coleman (1998) has suggested that ‘dense social networks insulate members of particular social worlds from outside influences allowing them to preserve distinctive cultural elements’ (in Crossley 2015, p.77) and in doing so, ‘cultivate trust and norms of mutual support and co-operation, which in turn constitute the social capital that allows particular social worlds to form and flourish’. IMUSA used specific FSA newsletters and fanzines as a repertoire of contention (Tilly, 1986) to link fans across the ISA and FSA network and in doing so brought together some of the ‘footballing anoraks wearing kits, former “hoolies” and the political gang’ (McMillan, field notes, 22 January 2016). However, the core dense networks which emerged were characterised by a politicisation of football consumption and a shifting of their political commitment from conventional workplace politics to football (King, 2003). Furthermore, Walsh, Miles, McMillan, Chorley and others formed important friendships which through their collective love of football and commitment to left-wing politics helped establish bonds beyond club-specific loyalties and issues.

I focus upon this dense network here not to reduce the heterogeneity of fan groups to one single model but rather to illustrate how some ISAs, through an affiliation and cooperation with the FSA and use of fanzines, created a sense of belonging. According to Blumer (1951, p.205), this takes the form of an ‘esprit de corps’ which organised the feelings on behalf of the broader (ISA) movement and helped them share in its mission. Whilst many of the ISAs were focused primarily on their own club specific issues and campaigns, the building of alliances and coalitions evidenced the identification of common enemies, personal relationships and group rituals (Blumer, 1951) during the neoliberal transformation of the game. The FSA (from 1985-1995) had been unable to build a national mass movement of fans however specific networks and resources with ties to fanzines, had led the way in agitating and establishing a culture of contestation (Jary, Horne and Bucke, 1991). The FSA and fanzine networks and interactions had sped up and become more intense during the late 1980s in the wake of Heysel, Hillsborough, the proposed ID card

scheme, the Taylor Report, and the formation of the Premier League. In the mid-1990s, some core ISA networks at clubs like Manchester United, Southampton, and Leeds had also become ‘less privatised in orientation and began to focus on some collective activities’ (Crossley, 2002) such as anti-racism campaigning, the pricing policies of clubs and the policing of fans standing in all-seated stadia. In doing so, they met in both formal and informal spaces and places to organise relational collective action:

We used that network to meet and exchange ideas and information, leaflets which we were all putting out and through that we were working alongside the FSA without any formal arrangement ... it was fairly loose but most of the groups were involved in the FSA as well and helped bolster that movement, and we were pushing for more cooperation between the different groups.

Andy Walsh (personal interview, 3 April 2017)

According to Becker (1974) and Crossley (2015), these interactive places could be referred to as ‘foci’ which bring people together to share ideas and strengthen personal ties. Within these foci, activists form working utopia’s which provide the sites where movement culture is reproduced (Cleland et al. 2018). These utopias ranged from public houses before and after matches, ISA meetings, regional and national FSA events and conferences and the emerging regional Football Task Force meetings in 1998. For some, these joint ceremonial working utopias were also important in forming what Durkheim (1915) referred to as ‘collective effervescence’. In 1998, the FSA coordinated by Steve Beauchampé, held its annual conference on Saturday 30th May in the Major Buckley Suite at Wolverhampton Wanderers’ Molineux stadium on the eve of the 1998 France World Cup. The conference focused upon the Football Task Force and the debate on the relationship between the FSA and ISAs (*FSA newsletter*, 1998). McMillan nostalgically recalled how the conference (as a working utopia) further strengthened the friendship ties and esprit de corps between ‘the gang’:

We stayed overnight and all us lefties ... ah the beer, and the gang, Longden and Milesy, we were in one of the corporate boxes at Molineux and we turned to each other laughing at the irony.

Perry McMillan, (personal interview 22 January 2016)

The Manchester-Southampton-Newcastle network was characteristic of what Blau (1974; 1977) referred to as 'homophilous' in respect to those actors (nodes) position in social space. Walsh, Longden, McMillan, Chorley and Miles as key nodes within their ISA network(s) formed ties and interacted with each other (as a cluster and clique) because they had similar political tastes. Moreover, these direct contacts were important in 'aligning frames to achieve a common definition of the problem with modern football and all-seater legislation' (Goodwin and Jasper, 2014, p.53).

Two months earlier, McMillan communicated plans of a nationwide protest in the *Ugly Inside* fanzine framed as *Stand Up For Football Day* coordinated by the FSA's Alison Pilling of the Leeds *Marching Altogether* network, SISA and IMUSA. This protest was also communicated to FSA members in a letter by Pilling on 13 February 1998 titled, *Safe Standing areas at all-grounds* noting that 'the FSA and a number of ISAs were supporting a move to reintroduce or retain safe terraced areas'. In doing so, it stated that 'the FSA believed 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'. These networks coordinated relational collective action in the form of a *Stand up like we used to* chant sung ten minutes before half-time and before the final whistle during games played on Saturday 4th March 1998.

In April 1998, IMUSA, coordinated by Longden, began spearheading a campaign to *Bring Back (Safe) Terracing* (IMSUSA newsletter, Issue 13). Political Process Theory (PPT) scholars of Social Movements argued that whilst protesters might develop sophisticated strategies and tactics and draw upon the resources of prior social networked



ties and SMO's, if the political environment is not favourable to the movements' aims, they will struggle to be successful (Tarrow, 1998). Whilst PPT has been criticised for its structuralist conceptualisation of political opportunities (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004), understanding the relational world around a movement as both political and cultural is nonetheless important. Moreover, the ways in which activists negotiate these environments through their own creativity and emotion is as important according to Jasper (1997). And it is through this creativity which ensures activists package ideas in particular ways to recruit new members and gain support (Benford, 1993). In doing so, Tilly and Tarrow (2006) argue that social movements make claims upon democratic political institutions whereby ordinary citizens 'engage in various forms of political "claim making" in which the state became their direct target' (Edwards 2014, p.82). In 1995, IMUSA, the FSA and NFFSC met with Tom Pendry as Shadow Sports Minister and co-author of Labour's *Charter for Football* to build political capital and influence prior to the 1997 General Election and subsequent forming of the New Labour Government. In 1998, these networks coordinated relational collective action in the form of the *Bring Back Terracing* campaign and *Stand Up for Football Day* protest deliberately to coincide with the Government's FTF as contextualised in chapter 2. In February 1998, Adam Brown, who himself was a K-stand season ticket holder and member of the FTF Working Group from 1997 to 1999, submitted IMUSA's proposals to the FTF pushing for the return to *Safe Terracing* as a key objective (Brown, 2000). The IMUSA proposals followed the October 1997 FSA report into the *Case for Terracing: 20 Questions and Answers* which Brown himself sent to the FTF. At SISA, McMillan and Chorley had successfully managed to get the FTF (chaired by David Mellor) to visit Southampton at the Polygon Hotel on 23 April. In doing so, and alongside the FSA and IMUSA and other fan groups, they urged the FTF to consider the *Return of Safe Terraced Areas* (*Ugly Inside*, issue 47).

The period from 1995 to 1998 was important in connecting networks and strengthening ties across the FSA, NFW and ISA relational fields. Jasper (1997, p.115) has argued that these ties ‘often involve emotional allegiances and experiences which help propel them into protest’. The perceived cultural loss of aspects of imagined authentic football fan culture had created what Durkheim understood as collective sentiments, rituals and symbols through effervescent modes of action (Crossley, 2002). Consequently, important friendships and solidarities were formed which (emotionally) helped ‘move the movement’ of the FSA/ISA collective (Cleland et al. 2018). For *Perry on the Left Wing*, the IMUSA gang mattered:

Respect to the IMUSA gang; Keep Standing, Singing, Smiling, Supporting.

Perry McMillan (*Ugly Inside*, 1998)

One of the collective sentiments communicated in 1998 amongst Premier League ISAs, was the way in which all-seated stadia had sanitised the atmosphere and matchday experience. At United, IMUSA recognised what they felt were ‘alienating’ heavy handed tactics and treatment of fans by a Special Projects Security (SPS) firm hired by the club to deal with supporters persistently standing (IMUSA newsletter). For Walsh:

The issues around standing were very much about the experience of the match going supporter and what the matchday was like, and in terms of collective action, that easily transferred into discussions about ground redevelopment which were going on during the 90s post-Hillsborough, for example, moving from the Dell to St Mary’s for example became a key issue for Southampton fans and so these issues connected fans across ISAs and the FSA.

Andy Walsh (personal interview, 3 April 2017)

In February 1998, Walsh appeared on the BBC Radio 5 programme; *Ruscoe on 5* alongside Simon Inglis (author of *Safe Terracing and Safety at Sports Grounds*), Dr Chris Nicholson (HSE lead for the Taylor Enquiry into Hillsborough) and John De Quidt (CEO of the FLA). Nicholson had gone public with his view that new terracing could be constructed in a safe

manner as long as the *Green Guide* ensured appropriate guidelines were followed. During the debate, Walsh argued the collective sentiment that football fan organisations were being ignored by those who ran the game and queried why the FTF, despite being asked at every regional meeting around the country, were refusing to examine the case for newly constructed terracing nearly ten years after Hillsborough. Whilst De Quidt accepted it might be possible to ‘create terracing of a reasonable standard’ he maintained that it ‘would never be as safe as seating’ and that seating must be seen in the broader context of appropriate and effective ‘crowd safety measures’. One day earlier on 24th February, Radio 4’s sports news correspondent Catherine Robinson interviewed Nicholson and the Minister for Sport Tony Banks on the case for *Safe Terracing*. Having been elected in 1997, the New Labour government replaced Tom Pendry with Banks, who subsequently established the FTF (Brown, 2000). However, as Brown himself realised, Banks refused to accept the case for *Safe Terracing* as part of the FTF agenda (Bower, 2007) and during the interview with Robinson, reiterated that ‘there was going to be no return to terracing within the Premier League and first division, and that the government was committed in continuing with the all-seater programme throughout the football league’. Moreover, Banks claimed that there was ‘no support in Parliament and that whilst the case had been put to him forcibly by supporters, there was no way it was going to happen’ (*Radio 4* transcript, 24 February 1998). In 1998, whilst fans had begun to articulate collective sentiments towards *Safe Terracing* in a more coordinated manner, the UK government and FLA remained strongly opposed.

Later that year, on 12 August 1998, the connecting of networks and strengthening of ties led to the formation of a new initiative at the FSA conference under the name of the *CoFS* which included Longden, Brown, Miles, Pilling, McMillan, Chorley, Rob McDermott, Ian Todd, Alan Bloore, and Brian Lomax. As Brewin had realised many years earlier, the football authorities and the Premier League in particular would often question

why they should talk to the FSA or the ISA network when the NFFSC existed as a separate body. There had been some attempts to bring the groups together, however in 1998, Brown, Longden and others within IMUSA helped broker further discussions between the FSA, the NFFSC and other ISAs which helped establish the *CoFS* (IMUSA Newsletter, issue 17). After Crabbe had stepped down as chair of the FSA in 1996 he was replaced by then serving South Yorkshire police officer, Graham Bean who'd led the FSA's legal network since 1995. According to Longden, Bean had initially suggested it was 'too early and rushed for the FSA to become involved with the *CoFS*' (IMUSA Newsletter, issue 17) which led to Adam Brown falling out with him and resigning from the FSA national committee (Brown, personal correspondence, 8 March, 2018). Whilst the NFFSC under the chairmanship of Ian Todd were also initially reluctant, on 27th June 1999, twenty six supporters groups attended the first *CoFS* conference including ISAs, fanzine editors and official supporters' clubs and all agreed a *Charter for Football* as the basis for the *CoFS* campaigning work. Graham Bean stepped down as chair of the FSA in early 1999 having secured employment with the FA as a compliance officer and was replaced by Alison Pilling. In 1995, Pilling, Thomas and other members of the Leeds *Marching Altogether* network had helped coordinate the FSA fan embassy in Leeds for the Euro 96 tournament. Two years later after a successful tournament, Pilling took over as FSA international officer from Steve Beauchampé and successfully secured some funding from MasterCard to sponsor the 1998 World Cup fan embassies in France. In doing so, the FSA created a formal paid role as 'lead' for the tournament which Kevin Miles applied for and successfully secured after meeting Pilling at her home in Leeds (interview notes, 14 March 2018). Like Walsh, Miles had become a central node in the ISA and FSA networks. In 1998, he was chair of INUSA, the formal FSA lead for the international fan embassies at the 1998 World Cup in France, and chair of the *CoFS*.

As I close the chapter, it is worth reflecting on what Brown (1998) himself argued were two key problems in his critique of fan democracy during the end of the first *timescale*. Firstly, in terms of supporter representation, it was difficult for any specific organisation to legitimately claim they represented the majority views of supporters when in reality, such organisations were dominated by an active minority. And secondly, fan groups and the campaigns formed were often charged with being conservative and backward looking during a period of modernisation. Brown's own FTF records noted that the calls for a reintroduction of terracing had been subject to this charge. However, according to Brown, the campaigns which emerged during the 1990s were much more forward-looking and represented 'a fundamental regeneration of fandom - politicised, sometimes carnivalesque, highly organised and uniquely popular' (1998, p.65). What had become clear to the core FSA and ISA networks was the need for greater co-operation, despite being dominated by the 'generally well educated and activists elements'.

Whilst IMUSA alongside *Shareholders United* successfully demonstrated the power of club-based fan movements and their networked resources in preventing Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB from taking control of Manchester United in 1998 (Brown and Walsh 1999), they had also led the way in seeking to strengthen core network ties in multiple ways through the *CoFS* as a hub-centred network. And this helped generate the solidarity, trust and situational definitions of 'modern football' across the FSA, ISA, and football fanzine relational movements across this *timescale*.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter offered a rich social history of the FSA and argued that it emerged as one of three relational social movements in English football from 1985-1999. The chapter showed how the FSA, the football fanzine and ISA movements developed shared ways of working together and in doing so created what Diani (2003) referred to as a ‘social movement dynamic’. This dynamic produced the solidarities which bound core supporter networks together through a shared commitment to social democracy and what constituted the appropriate consumption of football during a period of significant social change. By producing this social history, the chapter argued that whilst the FSA failed to become a large social movement in terms of membership base, it was successful in networking a critical mass of highly resourced actors who were able to communicate effectively across various regions in English football (Marwell and Oliver, 1988; Crossley and Ibrahim, 2012). In doing so, it connected to football fanzines and ISAs as a relational movement which sought to preserve ‘vernacular’ football values and respond to an increasing assault on ‘traditional football supporter culture (Jary, Horne and Bucke, 1991). Consequently, the micro-level networks, relationships and interactions which emerged between these movements produced a *CoFS* as a hub-centred network and homophilous cluster whereby many of the core supporter activists shared similar political tastes.

What this chapter thus showed is that whilst no formal movement against the all-seating legislation emerged across this *timescale*, important switchers between the FSA and leading ISAs such as IMUSA and the *CoFS* did begin to mobilise support for small-scale protests which included *Stand Up for Football*, *Stand Up Like We Used To* and *Bring Back (Safe) Terracing*. This was important for two reasons. Firstly, these protests were framed in a way which connected to an imagined discourse of authenticity, and in turn began to facilitate a growing sense of moral protest (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). By doing so, the *CoFS* argued that the all-seating legislation was responsible for enhancing crowd

management and punishing football supporters after Hillsborough. Moreover, by highlighting the perceived heavy handed tactics of some stewards and clubs to deal with persistent standing in new all-seated stadia, the *CoFS* began to show that some football supporters were not passive actors ready to become ‘accustomed and educated to sitting’ (*Taylor Report*, 1990, p.12-14). And secondly, whilst King’s (2003) critique of the FSA as being more ineffective in mobilising fans than ISAs was accurate, the *CoFS* network began to politicise standing as an important national issue which could connect supporters across an increasingly deregulated environment.

By arguing, albeit unsuccessfully, that *Safe Terracing* should be placed on the FTF agenda in 1998, the *CoFS* network had nonetheless, created coordination mechanisms which became the basis for strategic interaction across 1999-2009. I argue here that this became the basis for a period of agitation between football supporters, led by the FSA, and the state, towards a movement which pressed for a change to the all-seating legislation. And that the development of specific tactics, resources and leadership as documented in the next chapter, were a consequence of the coordination mechanisms here, initially underpinned by a commitment to building a national campaign for new modern terracing.

## CHAPTER FIVE

1999 - 2009

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter extends the social history of football supporter activism in English football, by showing how the *CoFS* helped strengthen ties between the FSA and NFFSC to become one unified Social Movement Organisation (SMO) in 2002. The FSF which emerged from this unification, became part of an expanding Social Movement Industry (SMI) alongside SD, *Supporters' Trusts* and *Football Supporters International* (FSI), at the intersection of two *timescales* connected by an expanding New Labour 'Third Way' political landscape. In this chapter, I show how central players within the *CoFS* and FSA networks worked together to develop a formal constitution for the unification of the FSA and NFFSC, which in turn became a mechanism to develop a stronger 'insider' influence within the decision making structures and governance of professional football. In doing so, new political opportunities and strategic interactions between these core football supporter networks and the state emerged, becoming what Tarrow (1998) referred to as a movement 'cycle' or 'wave' of contention. And so the chapter documents both the macro-level symbolic and discursive spaces in which these strategic interactions took place, and the complex overlaps between personal and organisational social networks which themselves helped coordinate coalition based collective action across 1999-2009. I argue that the FSF emerged as a SMO underpinned by more informal, interpersonal networks of ties between supporter activists across the FSA, football fanzine, and ISA movements, which were switched together by pre-existing networks through the *CoFS*.

The chapter shows how the emergence of club-specific campaigns against the all-seating legislation such as those at Manchester City and West Ham became more effective



in mobilisation when developing mutually influencing relationships with core supporter activists networked through the *CoFS* and FSF. And these established small networks around pre-existing friendships, which were switched together by the *CoFS* and leading ISAs such as IMUSA, were critical in developing transnational relations and networks with supporter groups in Spain and Germany (King, 2003). This was significant because it became a mechanism to explore new convertible standing/seating areas in German football and develop strategic interactions with the Minister for Sport and the FLA. In doing so, campaigns like *SAFE* (Standing Areas for Eastlands) at Manchester City became a formal policy area adopted by the FSF and evidenced the complex ways in which movements emerge and operate at the intersection of unorganised individual protest and organised collective protest across a political and cultural *timescape* which is shifting all the time (Edwards, 2014).

I thus argue in this chapter, that Safe Standing emerged as a networked social movement *in action*, from the networks, relationships and interactions which connected two *timescales* (1989-1999 and 1999-2009). Central to this, were the coordination mechanisms which developed coalition based strategies between the *CoFS*, leading ISAs, networked fanzine writers and the new FSF as a more professionalised SMO. And this chapter shows how Safe Standing evolved in ways which brought new networks, resources, tactics and leadership to protest against the all-seating legislation, which sought to reprogram movement logics away from a ‘rhetoric of reaction’ to a ‘rhetoric of change’ (Hirschman, 1991; Gamson and Meyer, 1996). To achieve this, Safe Standing developed repertoires of contention which were culturally available and shaped by cultural meanings in historical contexts (Gillan, 2018). This was significant because as a movement against the all-seating legislation, it recognised ‘terracing’ and Hillsborough’ had become inseparable in the minds of both broader football supporter networks in England and those with political capital in professional football. And thus by abandoning terracing, in favour

of exploring new Rail Seating (convertible standing/seating) technology in Germany, Safe Standing achieved some success in mobilising political support from the Liberal Democrat party and ensuring Hillsborough, as a discourse, became less dominant in opposition.

The core contribution of this chapter is to show how the emergence of Safe Standing as a networked social movement was linked to a highly contentious period in British politics in which the transition from Thatcherism to New Labour informed the different frames and ideological currents adopted by core supporter activists. In other words, the rich micro-level analysis outlined in chapter 4 and here in chapter 5, intersects with longer term processes such as the expanding neoliberal *timescape* of English football. As Gillan (2018) noted, movement ‘names’ are deeply political, and in the case of Safe Standing, this highlights the fuzzy temporal boundaries of social movements, in which multiple *timescales* carry different (but relational) meanings, strategic preferences and tactics. The small-scale protests coordinated by the *CoFS* in chapter 4, *moved against* the increasing criminalisation of football supporters and assault on traditional supporter culture, and in doing so, *moved for* greater supporter democracy and rights to retain aspects of standing (terraced) culture. In this chapter, as a networked social movement coordinated by the FSF, Safe Standing *moved against* the social, cultural and political legacy of Hillsborough and the persistent standing of supporters in all-seated stadia, and in doing so, *moved for* alternative, technical solutions which could make standing, as a modern cultural practice ‘safer’. I argue this became a significant tactical shift which enabled a small core Safe Standing network to become political actors, and in a position to affect the future consumption of English football, albeit in ways which could be both intended and unintended.

## ‘STAND UP IF YOU LOVE CITY’: EMERGING POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

It is impossible to say what Taylor would say in the current context. However, given the dramatic changes in the game over the last ten years, it seems to be sheer folly to claim that the Taylor Report is the ‘last word’ on the issue. We are in 2001, not 1990, after all, and we need to examine the issues now, not from a 1990 perspective.

Adam Brown (Letter to Kate Hoey MP Minister for Sport, 2001)

In chapter 2, I documented the legacy of the FTF’s third report *Investing in the Community* and the development of *Supporter Trusts* within the government funded initiative SD (Hamil et al. 2001), which embodied values of mutual support and community alongside self-help and social responsibility (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2007). In December 1999, ten years after the Hillsborough stadium disaster, the FTF published its final report into football’s *Commercial Issues*. This split the FTF producing two reports; a majority report backed by the chair, vice chair, three supporters’ groups and independent members, and a minority report produced by the football authorities (Brown, 2006). During the course of 1999-2000, the *CoFS* and FSA networks under the chairmanship of Kevin Miles and Alison Pilling played a leading role in campaigning to persuade the government and the FA of the need for an independent regulator via a permanent Football Audit Commission (*The Football Supporter*, March 2000). Chapter 2 noted that whilst such calls for greater fan involvement in the regulation of the game demonstrated commitment to mutualism and participatory democracy (Martin, 2007), the weakness of the ‘Third Way’ ensured the FTF became a vehicle for the government to control which decisions would be implemented (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2007). Nonetheless, this period contextualises the strategic interactions which took place across those strengthened FSA, ISA, fanzine and *CoFS* weak ties. According to Granovetter (1995) information is more likely to come from acquaintances than friends and thus it is those ties that bridge across network structure which are an important source of social capital. Stronger ties for Granovetter (1995) are

those needed for cooperation and coordination to develop network trust and the sharing of important resources.

In 1999, these connections were important in helping establish the *CoFS*' aim of building a new, unified, national supporters' movement promoting the coming together of existing supporters' organisations (interview notes, Pilling, 14 March 2018). At the 1999 annual FSA conference, Alison Pilling was re-elected chair, whilst Kevin Miles was elected to the national committee as the *CoFS* chair and FSA lead for the international fan embassies at Euro 2000. Having returned to the FSA in 1998, Craig Brewin was re-elected treasurer which he held until the summer of 2000. Brewin captured how the FSA had evolved in that ten-year period:

By then, things had started to get really, really serious because you had Supporters Direct set up and a Labour government, and so we had government ministers not just inviting us into their offices but coming to speak to us at the conferences, and we were becoming ..... I wouldn't say we were becoming part of the establishment, but there was a direction of travel, in the sense that we were becoming a formal union. It was just becoming a very different beast to what it was earlier. And it's probably a lot better for that. I didn't find my contribution as valuable because there were so many people now, so many people campaigning and willing to get involved in the national campaigns that were going on.

Craig Brewin (personal interview, 31 March 2017).

Supporting both Pilling and Brewin, was Malcolm Clarke, a Stoke City supporter, and graduate from Keele University in the late 1960s. Having previously been involved as a political activist, Clarke, who worked for a business consultancy in Sale, had joined the FSA during the early 1990s. However, after attending his first national conference in 1996, Clarke was elected to the national committee in the role of Football League liaison officer one year later (Interview notes, Clarke, 3 February 2016). Like Pilling, Clarke was very supportive of the *CoFS* proposals to merge the FSA and NFFSC organisations and at the FSA annual conference in 2000, both proposed a motion to include FSA affiliation to the NFFSC and the need to further develop the *CoFS* as a campaigning body that encouraged

the widest possible participation (*The Football Supporter*, September 2000). At that conference, Pilling stood down as chair to take on the role of national committee treasurer from Brewin, and Malcolm Clarke was elected chair of the FSA. Having previously helped coordinate the FSA embassy at Euro 96 and established the *Free Lions* England fanzine for the 1998 World Cup, Paul Thomas of the Leeds *Marching Altogether* network was elected to the FSA national committee and worked closely with Kevin Miles on the FSA's International Work from 2000 to 2004. And supporting Clarke as vice-chair, was Dave Boyle, a Wimbledon supporter and media officer at Rochdale Borough Council. Boyle had graduated from Lancaster University with a BA in Politics in 1996, and then an MA in Cultural Studies two years later. In 1998, Boyle attended a BBC-led 'Football Business' event at which he joined the FSA and became a member of the national committee the following year (Interview notes, Boyle, 24 March 2016). As newly elected vice-chair of the FSA in summer 2000, Boyle tabled a conference motion welcoming the aims and objectives of SD and in November that year, became an SD case worker at Birkbeck College alongside his role at the FSA.

As the FSA and *CoFS* entered the new millennium, seeking to build a more effective and unified national supporter movement to politically reform football and achieve greater supporter representation, it remained committed to campaigning for *Safe (Terraced) Standing Areas*. Meanwhile, in October 1999, a Manchester City supporter Phill Gatenby was holidaying on the Algarve and asked the hotel manager about the possibility of watching the local second division team Portimonense Sporting Clube play in the town of Portimao. Gatenby, a post-punk music fan who grew up in Warrington, was an avid fanzine writer often contributing to the City zine *Blue Print* before creating his own zine; *This Charming Fan*, characterising the 'holy trinity' of football, fashion and music (Redhead, 2015). Like myself, Gatenby had experienced the displacement from the Kippax terrace upon its demolition, and in 1995 published a 32 page text and photograph booklet titled

*Standing Ovation: A tribute to the Kippax* which compiled ‘individual fans’ reminiscences of days on which the Kippax became indelibly etched into their memories’ (Birch, 1995). This was characteristic of the way in which fanzines, in one sense opposed the new consumption of football, yet through an appeal to authenticity, actively facilitated the re-marking of football to a wider audience (King, 1998).

As Gatenby arrived at the local Second Division stadium in Portimao, he noticed ‘there were no seats in any part of the ground, rather just large concrete steps with lines dividing the space where each fan should sit, with a painted number to notify them where their “seat” was’ (Gatenby, personal correspondence, 19th January 2018). Upon speaking to one of the groundsmen, Gatenby learned that only under the roof of the Main Stand did fans actually sit down and thus he began to query ‘what constituted a seat’ and whether this particular design could be used in the vacant Commonwealth Games Stadium which would become Manchester City’s new home from the 2003/04 season (Caton, 2012, p.252). After reading an article in the Independent newspaper which questioned the ambiguity of the all-seater legislation in the Championship and League’s One and Two, Gatenby contacted the journalist about the ‘seating’ in Portimao and his intention to ask UEFA and the FA if it could be used in City’s new stadium in East Manchester. He then received a telephone call from the journalist informing him that from 2001, such ‘seating’ would be outlawed and instead consist of a ‘seat measurement off the step and made from non-inflammable material’. Two days later, Gatenby received a second telephone call from the journalist informing him that a friend within his social network had returned from Germany and was particularly impressed by a stadium which housed fans in convertible standing/seated areas. These interactions agitated Gatenby into forming a club-specific *Safe Standing* campaign at Manchester City titled ‘SAFE’ - *Standing Areas for Eastlands* (Interview notes, Gatenby, 2 November 2016). For Gatenby, the ‘SAFE’ acronym defined what the campaign would be about; safety of fans first and foremost and not a return to the previous standing terraces

of the 1970s and 1980s. In November 1999, the Independent published a short piece on *SAFE* with Gatenby's email address which generated some interest amongst fans nationally. New to the internet, Gatenby recalled how:

From having previously produced fanzines and selling them in all weathers, to being able to contact or be contacted by fans throughout the country and leaving notices on fan message boards was what made the campaign explode from the original forty odd fans that became hundreds in a matter of weeks. I was able to send newsletters as and when information came to me.

Phill Gatenby (personal correspondence, 19 January 2018)

Whilst fanzines still played a role in offering fans a space in which to communicate supporter related issues in 1999, the 'increasing availability of the internet facilitated widespread public access to "cyberspace" and thus according to Millward (2008, p.302) the 'young, well-educated men who were so instrumental in the development of the fanzine movement were likely candidates to develop information communication technology skills. This produced a new E-zine movement at the turn of the twenty first century which in some cases became an 'online continuation or sister project of fanzines' (Millward, 2008, p.302) and opened up a 'whole new communicative space for football fans' (Boyle and Haynes, 2004, p.141). Using his work computer at the Princes Trust, Gatenby successfully tapped into this online space to agitate other supporters including fan networks from IMUSA, the FSA, Leeds United and Everton. After a few emails, Gatenby organised meetings every six weeks at the Woolpack pub in Stockport, and the Corn Mill in Huddersfield, which were attended by Mark Longden, Adam Brown and Andy Walsh from IMUSA, Gary Hewitt from Leeds, Shiela Spiers from the FSA and a local journalist (Gatenby, personal correspondence, 19 January 2018).

Whilst *SAFE* emerged as a Manchester City based campaign with positive support from various City supporters' clubs, many city fans remained largely apathetic. However, the role of IMUSA and their contribution to forming the *CoFS* facilitated a mutually

influencing relationship which enabled Gatenby to draw on important political capital and habitus for activism and to tap into a wider network of supporter organisations:

Some City fans took delight in the fact that United fans were being hammered by Trafford Borough Council with threats of stand closures and bans on fans (for persistent standing). I also got a little stick from City fans for working closely with IMUSA - "How are your red friends?" I would get asked frequently. I was told IMUSA were using me to hide behind fronting their fight against Trafford Council. The truth was I was using IMUSA more than they were using me. They were very politically astute and I learnt a lot from them in using the media to get the message across and how to get the campaign up and running and the do's and don'ts over various aspects of the campaign.

Phill Gatenby (personal correspondence, 19 January 2018)

After a few meetings, the network decided that *SAFE* would remain an independent campaign but with the support of the FSA. Having led the campaign to put *Safe Standing* on the FTF agenda, Adam Brown was in a position to advise Gatenby about the ways in which previous campaigns had evolved and the difficulties in gaining political support. Moreover, IMUSA's transnational relations with groups in Spain and Germany (King, 2003) ensured the *SAFE* network was able to connect with emerging European contexts in order to investigate the Independent journalists' story about convertible standing/seating areas in the Bundesliga. Consequently, the *SAFE* campaign wrote to Kate Hoey MP as Minister for Sport, under the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), six years after David Lee had identified her as a football fan and someone he believed would be interested in the FSA's calls for new safer terracing. According to Gatenby, Hoey replied to the question posed to her, 'could German style convertible standing / seating areas be built into stadiums in England and Wales?' with a firm 'No'. Hoey had been advised by the FLA that such areas were being phased out of Germany in preparation for their bid to host the 2006 World Cup and that the previous Minister for Sport, Tony Banks MP had refused to consider standing areas in English stadia because they too were seeking to host the international tournament, where according to FIFA regulations?, only all-seated grounds would be permissible. Knowing Hamburg SV's German stadium was being



redeveloped for completion in 2000, Gatenby contacted a Hamburg supporters group to query whether it would include a standing area. Upon learning not only were Hamburg introducing two convertible seating/standing areas, but that other German clubs were incorporating them into their stadia for the World Cup bid, Gatenby wrote another letter to Hoey informing her that the information she'd received was incorrect (Gatenby, personal correspondence, 19 January 2018). In July 2000, Germany won the bid to host the 2006 World Cup with nine out of the ten stadia having modern convertible seating/standing areas to comply with both the German FA and UEFA regulations (Caton, 2012). Shortly afterwards, Hoey invited Gatenby and Longden to meet with her at the DCMS office in London and after viewing photographs of Hamburg's newly built standing area, she passed them onto the FLA to investigate.

In September 2000, newly elected FSA chair Malcolm Clarke outlined the recent German stadia developments in his editorial column of *The Football Supporter*. In doing so, he noted:

The technology to allow standing to happen has advanced enormously since the days of the Taylor Report. The time may now be ripe to re-open the issue but it needs a focus. The campaign for safe standing in the new Commonwealth Games stadium which will subsequently be Manchester City's new home, and for which the stands at the ends of the ground will not be built until after 2002 present us with such an opportunity.

Malcolm Clarke (*The Football Supporter*, September 2000).

Additionally, the magazine noticeboard column advertised the *SAFE* campaign, encouraging members to contact Gatenby via his telephone or email. Consequently, the *CoFS*, FSA and *SAFE* formed a relational network which resulted in the FSA funding a fact-finding trip to Germany to investigate the different convertible seating/standing methods and then report back the findings to Hoey. The core members of the network sent to Germany were Gatenby, Longden and Miles who spoke fluent German having graduated with a BA (Hons) in German from University College London in 1982 (Longden, personal

interview, 24 January 2018). In King's (2003) discussion of the development of supporters' transnational relations, he documents how Miles and *INUSA* had established links with a fan group at Schalke 04 from Gelsenkirchen. Central to this connection was Stuart Dykes, a Manchester United and Schalke 04 supporter, originally from Mansfield but who'd moved to Germany and was both a member of IMUSA, the Schalke Fan Initiative and on the committee of the German *Bundniss Aktiver Fußball Fans* (BAFF, Association of Active Fans). *BAFF* had emerged as a network to campaign against all-seater stadiums in Germany (Dykes, personal interview 19th July, 2017). And like Miles, Dykes also spoke fluent German and was a former member of Militant and strongly tied to Andy Walsh.

In December, 2000, this network met Dykes in Gelsenkirchen who, acting as a translator, helped facilitate the visits to three stadiums at Schalke 04, Hamburg SV and Werder Bremen. Out of the three convertible seating/standing methods, Gatenby, Longden and Miles were particularly impressed by a form of rail seating at Bremen where each seat folded up against a barrier which ran the length of every two rows allowing fans to stand for Bundesliga games. And during UEFA competitions, the seat was unlocked and pushed down to comply with all-seater legislation (Gatenby, personal correspondence, 19 January 2018). The report produced was sent to Kate Hoey, Chris Smith (the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport), Tony Blair (Prime Minister), the FLA, the FA, the PL, the FL, the PFA, the *NFFSC* and the FSA (*Safe Standing Report*, 2001). It began by noting that what originally began as a Manchester City F.C. specific campaign, had emerged as an umbrella campaign for Safe Standing areas in England (*SAFE: Standing Areas for England*). As a result, Hoey recommended the FLA visit Germany to investigate the convertible seating/standing areas however after they initially refused, she instructed them to go (Interview notes, Gatenby, 2 November 2016). Meanwhile, former FSA activist and fanzine writer Adrian Goldberg whilst working as a broadcaster for the BBC1 show *Watchdog*, had learned of *SAFE* and wanted to produce a short piece for the programme.

Goldberg's documentary centred upon three areas. Firstly, he undertook interviews with Gatenby and Longden to learn more about the campaign. Secondly, he flew to Hamburg to inspect the convertible seating/standing area and interviewed club officials. And finally, unbeknown to her boss Chris Smith, Goldberg interviewed Hoey who had become more sympathetic to the campaign after receiving Gatenby, Longden and Miles' interim report.

On the morning of Friday 22 December, hours before the BBC 'Watchdog' programme was scheduled to air, the *SAFE* network began a concerted series of press interviews on Radio 5, the *Today* programme, BBC Breakfast, Sky, News 24, LBC, IRL and various other local radio stations via their own network contacts (*The Football Supporter*, 2001). Meanwhile, many of the UK national newspapers ran back page stories which predominantly focused Hoey's *Watchdog* interview, arguing the new technology in Germany should be examined further. According to Gatenby:

Many newspapers condemned Hoey for 'demanding' standing should be brought back. The Hillsborough Families Support Group (HFSG) attacked her for the same reason and her timing (a week before Christmas). Hoey stood firm and said at no point had she called for standing to be returned but that in light of new technology, the Government had a duty to look at any new evidence and act accordingly.

Phill Gatenby (personal correspondence, 19 January 2018)

However, Hoey's views appeared to be at odds with Government policy and subsequently the Culture Minister Chris Smith distanced himself from the possibility of trying out a return to standing areas. According to Smith:

Whilst I understand the desire of some football supporters to stand at matches and had considered the case for a return to terraces in 1997, that review concluded that all-seater stadia are demonstrably safer than standing terraces, however those terraces are configured. Moreover, the Government's view remains what it has consistently been. Public safety is paramount and the Taylor Report had the last word on this issue. At all costs, we must ensure that Hillsborough cannot happen again.

*BBC Sport Online* (22 December 2000).

Subsequently in February 2001, Gatenby who was due to appear on the *Discovery* channel for a debate on Safe Standing, was informed by Hoey that the FLA had returned from Germany, but that Chris Smith had intervened and demanded their report be sent to him. Having seen a copy, Hoey and Gatenby wrote a press release from *SAFE* condemning Smith's decision to dismiss the Hamburg design and demanded the issue be looked at further (*SAFE Press Release*, 2001). To avoid suspicion at the DCMS, Hoey advised Gatenby to use a local internet cafe to send the press release to various media outlets which generated a lot of publicity and requests for interviews. Here, Gatenby and Hoey formed a type of 'misbehaviour' network (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999) as 'everyday troublemakers' (Goffman, 1961), evidencing how some forms of protest are often hidden from view and take place outside of more formal SMO's and wider networks (Edwards, 2014).

Towards the end of the first *timescale*, the *CoFS* network began to agitate a wider sense of dissatisfaction with the all-seater legislation, demonstrating how the emerging case for *Safe Terracing* and *Standing Up for Football* symbolised the legacy of the strong state and criminalisation of football fans and the neoliberal consumption of football during the 1990s (King, 1998). At the beginning of this *timescale*, central nodes within this network, particularly Miles and Longden supported by IMUSA, were important in helping Gatenby mobilise *SAFE*, initially as a Manchester City-based campaign but with a wider national consciousness, supported by the FSA. In doing so, they sought to identify other football clubs who were looking to either re-develop existing parts of their ground or were planning to build new stadia (Interview notes, Walsh, 3 April 2017). And from these networks, convertible seating/standing technology in German football emerged as a particular tactical innovation which *SAFE* used as a group convention (Crossley, 2011). The unsuccessful attempt to place *Safe Terracing* on the FTF agenda meant that Safe Standing in 2000 had to be framed in a different way. To achieve this, *SAFE* sought to innovate and improvise

by challenging the DCMS, FLA and PL powerbroker's with a new repertoire of contention in the quest to leverage power through the art of the surprise (Cleland et al. 2018). And thus *SAFE* emerged as a relational campaign seeking to develop strategic interactions with the state and all-seating legislation as new transnational contexts and political opportunities emerged in 2001 (Adam Brown, letter to Kate Hoey, 2001).

According to political process theorists (PPT) of social movements, however, whilst activists might develop sophisticated strategies and tactics and draw upon the resources of prior social networked ties, if the political environment is not favourable to the movements aim(s), they will often struggle to be successful (Tarrow, 1998; Koopmans, 1993). Tilly and Tarrow (2006) have argued that social movements make claims upon democratic political institutions whereby ordinary citizens 'engage in various forms of political "claim making" in which the state becomes their direct target' (Edwards 2014, p.82). As a result, chances for political influence are 'structured in different ways according to the type of political regime that exists, and that this regime provides activists with a political opportunity' (Edwards 2014, p83). These opportunities may be either 'open' or 'closed' (Eisinger, 1973) depending on whether political institutions are responsive or unresponsive to the democratic demands of activists. In 2001, *SAFE* and the FSA had successfully mobilised political interest in Safe Standing via the tabling of two Early Day Motions (EDM) in the UK Parliament. The first EDM, presented by Tony Clarke, Labour MP for Northampton South and a director for Northampton Town, sought to recognise the advances in stadium technology including those stadia within Germany and called upon the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and the Home Secretary to conduct an urgent review of current policy to examine the feasibility of introducing Safe Standing areas at grounds within the Premier and Nationwide leagues (*House of Commons*, 27 February 2001). The second presented by Roger Godsiff, Labour MP for Birmingham Sparkbrook and chairman of the Charlton Athletic Community Trust, sought to introduce a new

spectators bill which would remove the power to designate stadia as all-seated from the Secretary of State, arguing that football clubs should have the choice in the construction of new stands of stadia to incorporate areas of Safe Standing (*House of Commons*, 15 October 2001). The latter collected a total of 81 signatures from fellow MP's and was scheduled for debate on Friday 2 November 2001. However, as FSA chair Malcolm Clarke reported:

A suspiciously sudden increase in the bio-chemical reactions in the interior of the average Cornish pasty by a speaker in a previous debate on a food safety bill (which led to a 45 minute speech to a baffled House of Commons), "talked out" any chance of the Safe Standing bill being called. There is a baffling reluctance on the part of the government and football authorities to engage with supporters on Safe Standing.

Malcolm Clarke (*The Football Supporter*, December 2001)

According to Jasper (1998), emotions are important to understanding the opportunities and constraints within social movement mobilisation, particularly expressions of frustration, anger, alienation and anomie. Gatenby recalled the sense of disillusionment which followed the failed EDM:

And they call it democracy and wonder why voters become apathetic, it really felt like I was banging my head against a wall saying the same things round and round in circles and getting nowhere fast. For every door that was opened very slightly, three more were shut firmly.

Phill Gatenby (personal correspondence, 19 January 2018)

Gatenby's cynicism and frustration expressed a paradoxical political climate in 2001, which presented both opportunities and constraints for mobilisation. Having politicised Safe Standing in the UK Parliament, the *SAFE* relational network had engaged in strategic interactions which only reinforced and strengthened opposition to the campaign. In chapter 4, the informal small scale 'standing' protests which emerged from the relational FSA, fanzine, ISA and *CoFS* networks and fields began the process of collective claim making about all-seated stadia and 'modern' football. However, the attempts to frame pro-standing/terracing arguments as issues concerned with supporter choice and safety were difficult for two main reasons. Firstly, during a decade of widespread social change which

saw the birth of the Premier League and move to make all Premier League and Championship football stadia ‘all-seated’ by 1994, ‘standing’ was often seen by the footballing authorities, as both reactionary and opposed to modernity (Interview notes, Boyle, 24 March 2016). And secondly, whilst there was an attempt to use the Football Trust’s funding of improving the safety of ‘terracing’ in League’s One and Two as the basis to campaign for ‘modern’ Safe (Terracing) Standing (Interview notes, Brown, 28 July 2016), the “terracing” word itself had become synonymous with Hillsborough and hooliganism.

Steinberg (1999) considers how ‘meanings’ in movements are constructed through ongoing processes of social communication which are subject to dominant social discourses. As such, activists whilst making ‘efforts to subvert the dominant discourse and represent the world in a different way, are nevertheless embedded themselves within the discourse and can only employ categories and ideas that it provides’ (Edwards 2014, p.102). In 2001, the FSA and *CoFS* relational network began to formalise “safety” as a critical framing mechanism which aimed to persuade the DCMS of the case for new (*SAFE*) Safe Standing technology. In doing so, *SAFE* became part of a struggle around the production of meaning through its interaction with opponents. Moreover, the immediate rejection of *SAFE* by the FLA and the Secretary of State through a strengthening of their commitment to the all-seating legislation, both centralised the state as a key opponent and formed an ‘esprit de corps’ amongst this strongly tied network, facilitating a narrative of ‘we’ versus ‘them’ (Melucci, 1980). For Kevin Miles:

There seems to be so many advantages to having Safe Standing areas in football grounds, and so few real minuses, that a cynic might begin to think that all the spurious objections being scraped together conceal another agenda. Maybe for the football authorities it’s more about what sort of clientele they want in the grounds, what sort of atmosphere they want. Should it be a convivial setting for the conclusion of business deals and the wining and dining of clients, or should it be noisy, raucous and accessible for all? I don’t think there’s much doubt about what most supporters and then players and managers would prefer.

Kevin Miles (writing in *The Football Supporter*, 2001).

And in a letter to the DCMS on 12 August 2001, which he shared with Adam Brown, Andy Walsh, Bob Russell MP, Duncan Drasdo, Ian Todd, Kate Hoey MP, Mark Longden, Mick Meade, Phil Gatenby and Tony Clarke MP, FSA chair Malcolm Clarke accused the DCMS of being vulnerable to accusations of disingenuous presentation of evidence:

The FLA report did not look at “German practice”. It was a disappointment that the fans delegation to Germany, on a shoestring budget, were able to visit three grounds, whereas the FLA, a public authority charged with this responsibility, only visited Hamburg which is not the model preferred by many of those who have looked at all three. The examination of whether this model could reasonably and practically be installed at Premiership or Football League grounds did not address the general arguments for and against all-seater grounds. This system could with certain modifications comply with the safety standards required in England and Wales and could therefore be installed in a new stand or new ground. – (Malcolm Clarke, FSA letter, 12 August 2001)

Finally, during the course of 1999-2001, Adam Brown whilst heavily involved with the IMUSA campaigns at Manchester United alongside his work on the FTF and the ‘Football Scrutiny Panel’, had formed a strong tie with Hoey at the DCMS and wrote a series of letters to her as Minister for Sport which further outlined the case for Safe Standing in light of new technical innovations. Like Miles and Clarke, Brown was also suspicious and critical of the footballing authorities, particularly the Premier League and its relationship with the state:

In terms of the obstacles, you need to understand the power of the Premier League’s lobby with government; Safe Standing or Safe Terracing has never been part of what they envisaged or what they see as their brand and what they are selling, so the association with the bad old days and things like that are something they will trot out. When I was on the FTF there was quite a concerted attempt by the FSA to get it as one of the areas to be discussed and the government eventually ruled that was ultra-virus so it couldn’t be considered but behind the scenes, the Premier League had been lobbying very heavily on that, then following the FTF when Kate Hoey was Sports Minister ... it was clear that she was sacked by Blair because of Premier League lobbying because they thought she was too sympathetic to this cause.

Adam Brown (personal interview, 28 July 2016)



## FROM SOUTH-EAST LIVERPOOL TO NORTH LONDON: BUILDING A NATIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANISATION

Chapter 4 documented the emergence of three relational networked social movements in English football from 1985 to 1999. These networked movements; the FSA, fanzines and ISAs worked in coalition and influenced each other indirectly. Moreover, in doing so, they addressed themselves to overlapping socially democratic policies, interests and participants and developed some shared ways of working together. The FSA emerged as an early riser movement with a 'Liverpool centred' network. Throughout the course of 1989-1999, the central nodes within the FSA network moved from Liverpool to other UK cities, notably Manchester and Leeds and in doing so, interacted as a homophilous cluster through specific academic, friendship and political ties. These ties were central to the forming of a relational *CoFS*, which through its *Charter for Football* sought to strengthen the collective power of the FSA, fanzines and ISAs. During the start of this *timescale* and the initial legacy of the FTF, the *CoFS* played a key role in strengthening the ties between the two national supporter organisations; the FSA and the NFFSC. As a result, a delegation from the FSA which included Malcolm Clarke, Dave Boyle and the Safe Standing Campaign made a historic visit to the NFFSC National Council Meeting in early 2001 as part of a continuing process of closer alignment between the two organisations (Mark Agate, NFFSC secretary, *The Football Supporter*, April 2001). Central to this relationship were FSA and NFFSC chair's Malcolm Clarke and Ian Todd who were being increasingly accepted as 'collective' supporter representatives at meetings with the football authorities across governance, licensing, policing and Safe Standing (*The Football Supporter*, December 2001). And at the FSA national conference on Saturday 23 June 2001 at Sixfields Stadium, Northampton Clarke informed members that the NFFSC had recently passed a resolution in support of Safe Standing at its own conference on the 9 June. As one of several important 'national' issues, alongside 'criteria for "fit and proper" club ownership', 'problems of access,

disabled facilities and ticket pricing' and 'TV induced changes to kick off times', Safe Standing connected fans across both organisations and thus for Clarke, 'unity was vital if they were to achieve for supporters the voice in the game they deserved' (FSA annual conference minutes, June 2001).

As Kevin Miles and Paul Thomas prepared the FSA international work and *Free Lions* fanzine for the Japan and South Korea World Cup in May 2002, Alison Pilling as re-elected FSA treasurer sought to further develop funding and sponsorship for both international and domestic activity. One of the ways this would be achieved was to employ a part time FSA Development Worker for 2-3 days per week. On 6 April 2001, Steven Powell, a founding life member of both the *Arsenal Independent Supporters Association* (AISA) and the *Arsenal Football Supporters Club*, became the first domestic employee of the FSA in this role which involved work on fundraising, membership recruitment, IT development and editing *The Football Supporter* (Powell, personal interview, 29 January 2016). In 1996, the FSA were advertising for volunteers who spoke the languages of the various visiting countries at Euro 96. As a former local government worker and *Unite* Trade Union official who spoke fluent Spanish, Powell offered to volunteer at the Leeds embassy where Spain were based during the tournament. This formed a tie between Powell, Pilling and the *Marching Altogether* network, and this relationship led Pilling to encourage Powell to become more involved with the FSA and apply for the Development Officer position.

At the FSA conference in June 2001, one of Powell's first tasks was to move the sixteen year old FSA address from South East Liverpool to North London, after Shiela Spiers, of the original Merseyside network retired having spent many years on the National Committee. Passey and Giugni (2000, p.117) argue that 'when activists remain embedded in social networks relevant for protest and when they keep a symbolic linkage between their activism and their personal life-spheres, sustained participation is likely to occur'. As the Liverpool network nodes became less central within the FSA throughout the course of the

first *timescale*, those two factors became progressively separated from each other. Upon retiring from the FSA, Spiers and Garrett were recognised for their contribution by being made Honorary Vice Presidents of the national supporter organisation. Consequently, Powell set up a new P.O. Box in Highbury; N5 1WR, and with that, the FSA like the NFFSC, became a London based networked organisation.

Having established a joint working group to look at the rules of the FSA and the NFFSC as a prelude to building a new united organisation, Malcolm Clarke, Dave Boyle and Steven Powell devised an 18 month strategic plan seeking to ‘successfully influence the FTF and IFC process’, ‘improve the quality of *The Football Supporter* and extend its influence’, ‘make contact with more ISAs, fanzines and the expanding number of supporter groups active as a result of SD, and to develop a stronger relationship with the NFFSC’ (FSA *conference notes*, 2001). Consequently, Boyle began working on a new constitution for the unification of the FSA and NFFSC which aimed to achieve long-term additional funding and resources from key stakeholders within the football industry. This built upon the progress made by the *CoFS* initiative of uniting the various arms of the football supporters’ movement into one united voice for supporters of all professional and semi-professional clubs (FSA *conference notes*, 2001). However, as one of the leading voices in support of the unification, Clarke noted the initial difficulties faced:

Like all mergers, it wasn’t an easy process, very few people in the FSA were opposed to it, perhaps one or two, rather more in the NFFSC .... I think that they saw the FSA as a group of upstarts and trouble makers, there were some very conservative people in the NFFSC and I think some of them didn’t like the fact that the FSA had been formed at all in the 1980s ... they saw it as an insult and a threat. Rogan Taylor always said that when he formed the FSA he didn’t even know if the existence of the NFFSC which he perceived as an indication of how ineffective they were.

Malcolm Clarke (personal interview, 3 February 2016)

Despite this, Clarke was able to build important relationships with leading members of the NFFSC and played an important brokerage role in bringing these different weakly tied

actors together (Chesters and Welsh, 2006). Finally, during the summer of 2002 and ten years after the FSA and NFFSC passed motions supporting the establishment of a joint working party to discuss closer co-operation, the two organisations unified at the FSA national conference organised by Powell at Highbury. In doing so, they created a new national supporter organisation; the FSF as contextualised in chapter Two. Upon signing the instrument of amalgamation, Clarke and Todd outlined their vision for the FSF, which aimed to offer a more ‘professional and comprehensive service to all individual members FSF affiliates, including Supporters Clubs, Trusts, ISAs and other democratic fan groups’. To achieve this, the FSF having met the FTF recommendation of ‘forming a single unified voice for football supporters’, secured financial support from the PFA, and sought to generate additional funding from other stakeholders within the football industry (*FSF news*, September 2002). This was an example of how groups in organisations often work together to mobilise resources and begin to strike alliances with those in power (Freeman, 1979; McCarthy and Zald, 2001).

Throughout the course of September 2002 to October 2003, key roles on the FSF National Council were shared by central nodes within both FSA and NFFSC networks. Both Clarke and Todd were jointly elected as co-chairmen, Dave Boyle and Alan Bloore were elected as deputy chairmen, Mark Agate was elected secretary and Alison Pilling and Carroll Clark were joint treasurers. Kevin Miles and Steven Powell continued in their formal roles as International Coordinator and Development Officer and Paul Thomas, Mark Longden, Kevin Miles and Phill Gatenby were amongst those members elected to the National Council. The newly formed FSF continued to be a North London based organisation but with regional divisions, and a national council which created a series of ‘sub-groups’ on key policy and organisational issues (Matz, *FSF News*, December 2002).

In chapter 4, I documented the ways in which the FSA had from 1990-1995, recognised the challenges of bureaucratisation and began to establish a series of specialised

roles and positions on its national committee. In doing so, it became a networked movement with some limited degree of formality and organisation. According to Christiansen (2009), this represents the 'coalescence' stage of social movement formation which is characterised by the coming together of movement constituents through demonstrations and formulation of strategy, such as the *CoFS*, the *Charter for Football* and the *Supporters Blueprint*. Throughout the course of 2002-2003, the FSF emerged as a more professional network characterised by higher levels of organisation and coalition based strategies. Christiansen (2009) conceptualises this as the 'bureaucratisation' stage of social movement formation, which is similar to Blumer's (1951) account of 'formalisation' and the 'development of group morale'. According to Malcolm Clarke:

The arrival of the FSF meant that we will be more organised and more united in future. We must become not reactive to each latest bad idea the people who run the game come up with, but produce our own blueprint for football. We are uniting; they are dividing. Only the common sense and traditional values of fans can save the game.

*FSF News* (December, 2002)

For Clarke, the *FSF Fan's Blueprint for Football*, underpinned by socially democratic principles, was not so much about 'reclaiming the game' but a sacrificial commitment to developing 'an unwavering attachment to the goal of the movement' (Edwards, 2014, p.29) or what Blumer (1951) described as an 'enduring collective purpose'. This purpose was for the FSF, to not only gain representation for football supporters on the executive bodies that control football clubs and the game more generally, but to also provide an independent and democratic structure through which the views of football supporters could be channeled and articulated (FSF Constitution 2002; *FSF Fans' Blueprint for Football*, 2003). To achieve this, the FSF through its formalisation and professionalisation created bureaucratic central decision making structures which were characteristic of a professional Social Movement Organisation (SMO) Zald and Ash, (1966). Paul Thomas captured this emerging professionalisation:

In the early FSA days, one or two people were able to become chair's quite quickly in retrospect, they were a mixed bag and I suppose that's the downside of being quite a loose sort of organisation but I think it began to build itself successfully from the FSA to the FSF and I think it had more clout as a genuine organisation and decision making body whereas it was a bit sort of ramshackle in the early days but then it takes time to build things.

Paul Thomas (personal interview, 15 February 2018)

As a networked professionalised SMO, the FSF like other supporter organisations needed a space and place in which collective action could take place. During the first *timescale*, the FSA national conferences provided a 'foci' where members were able to 'top up their beliefs in the FSA movements' aim of 'reclaiming the game' (Cleland et al, 2018, p59). According to Crossley (1999, p.817), it is in the foci of a movement that working utopias provide the sites where 'people learn how to practice differently, how to perceive, think and act in relation to other members of the (supporter) community. On Sunday 13 October 2002 at the NEC in Birmingham, the FSF formed a new working utopia which built upon those 'ideas and actions produced through previous relationships' in those FSA and NFFSC spaces of collective action. According to Cleland et al. (2018), such relationships, in this case those established within club specific and coalition networks spanning the NFFSC and FSA are important in bridging temporality. This relational working utopia; the annual FSF *Fans Parliament*, brought together over 200 fans from 74 different football clubs to discuss major issues facing the game, ranging from 'who runs football', 'atmosphere at grounds', 'Safe Standing', 'television and football', and the 'treatment of away fans'. Working utopias according to Crossley (1999, p.826) shape collective action in different 'physical' and 'emotional' ways but are characterised by an 'appeal to the imagination' through the real communicative interactions which take place.

These interactions may include debates on different approaches, policies and tactics and enable (in this case supporters both strongly and weakly tied through membership of the FSF) to 'learn from each other and thus enhance their discursive and tactical repertoires'

(Crossley, 1999, p.822). And these working utopias often give rise to commonly shared strong emotions which ‘tap into a deeper level of belief’ (Crossley, 1999, p.815). In the December 2002 edition of *FSF News*, the FSF reported a ‘remarkable degree of unanimity during most debates’, noting how fans were angry, passionate and articulate as they outlined the frustration felt as they watched a few powerful figures constantly undermine their clubs, whilst supporters continued to be excluded’. Forms of communication like *FSF News* and emerging online spaces ensured the FSF developed a communication convention which helped people within shared forums such as the Fans Parliament workshop activities, work more efficiently together (Becker, 2008).

The FSF continued to grow as a SMO during the course of 2003-2004 and in doing so engaged in strategic interactions with politicians and the footballing authorities both domestically and internationally. This ranged from submitting a formal FSF response to the European Commission on their challenge to the collective selling of TV rights by the Premier League, and giving evidence to the newly formed All-Party Parliamentary Football Group (APFPG) enquiry into the financial state of football. Whilst the FSF as a relational SMO comprised of hundreds of different heterogeneous fan networks, these strategic interactions were primarily led by ‘soft’ leaders with high levels of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In October 2003, Malcolm Clarke became the ‘formal’ sole chair of the FSF after Ian Todd retired to become FSF president but acted as a ‘soft’ leader in sharing positions of social, political and cultural influence with others on the national council.

Another ‘soft’ leader was Kevin Miles, who in 2003 became the FSF *International Coordinator* in a formal paid capacity having obtained Home Office funding to support the FSF’s international work. Whilst Miles’ FSF role had become more professionalised, his influence as a central node within the *CoFS* and transnational networks enabled him to switch together disparate supporter groups in protest by forming new coalitions (Castells, 2013). The success of this saw Miles programme an international network under the name

of FSI which consolidated the good working relations established across fan projects in Germany, Holland, Italy and Switzerland. The FSI sought to further develop the network of club-based supporters' groups across Europe with a view to involving them in the work and to secure funding from the European Commission for an international FSI-led fans embassy (Miles, *FSF newsletter*, 2003).

Having played an important role in building the new unified national organisation, Dave Boyle as both FSF co-deputy chair and deputy chief executive of Supporters Direct became another important switcher by connecting networks across this multi-organisational field (McCarthy and Zald, 2001). According to Zald and Ash (1966), the relationship between social movements as preferences for change and SMO's as vehicles that engage in collective action often results in more than one SMO existing on the same issue. Consequently, some social movements operate within a Social Movement Industry (SMI) which operate in multi-organisational fields (Curtis and Zurcher, 1973; Klandermans, 1992). However, these spaces are not structured rather are embedded by multifaceted relational networks (Diani, 1990; 1992) which often contain overlapping and mutually influencing relationships between different ties. As a switcher, Boyle strengthened the weak ties between these relational networks through his work on Supporters' Trusts, ownership and governance. In doing so, central nodes across both the FSF and SD helped coordinate coalition based collective action. One of the ways they achieved this was to continue making shared claim-making about the importance of German football as a new transnational context for both match going issues such as Safe Standing, and supporter ownership prior to the 2006 World Cup. As Dave Boyle claimed:

Working at Supporters Direct we'd been trying to take the narrative away from ... when you thought of fan owned clubs, you'd get 'oh like Barcelona?' .. And because we knew what we were talking about we'd always sort of go, yeah but Barcelona's not all that it's cracked up to be ... there were some serious problems, but we did use German football. But in 2004, you just couldn't get anyone interested in German football, the clubs were at a low ebb and there was the historic England vs German rivalry which meant people weren't immediately ready to engage and people just



didn't think of German football as an example worth thinking about. So you talked to people about the whole German Safe Standing issue ... I remember Stuart Dykes talking about how the German FA said we've got to keep standing in football because basically how else are you going to enculturate young people into adulthood in football stadia .. They actually said it has pedagogical usage and you're like fucking hell the FA wouldn't even know what pedagogy is. But no one was interested.

Dave Boyle (personal interview, 24 March 2016).

In 2004, however, the focus on German football and Safe Standing marked a lack of unity amongst some within the FSF and SD coalition network. Edwards (2014) argues that the importance of collective identity has been challenged by social movements which are characterised by disagreements over issues as basic as what to name the movement or differing interpretations of the key issues. Boyle noted how there was a 'snootiness' amongst some cliques within lower division fan networks towards the issue:

The whole issue of standing was sociologically an interesting one because I was involved in Supporters Direct which is all about ownership and a lot of people who were involved in that world saw Safe Standing as a purely aesthetic issue ... it was a campaign which whilst they weren't against it, it didn't seem important enough to be the thing which should be campaigned on. And it was a kind of ... in the same way politically you've got revolution and reform, about what is a legitimate subject for activism, what's the best use of activists time and there were people who basically thought that the royal road to power in football was through ownership and that's who I was working with, and therefore pretty much anything else was essentially a diversion. And also because football fans are divided between fans of big and small clubs ... and because standing still exists in the lower levels it was seen as a 'poncey' Premiership fan campaign whereas we down here at Exeter were being screwed by wanker owners and anyway if they wanted to stand up why don't they come down here and watch lower league football.

Dave Boyle (personal interview, 24 March 2016)

Consequently, Phill Gatenby, having been elected to the FSF national council with the portfolio for leading the national Safe Standing campaign, aimed to mobilise support and collective action amongst these complex, heterogeneous supporter networks. And as *SAFE* became part of a struggle around the production of meaning through its interaction with opponents and authorities, namely the FLA, government legislation and the discourse of 'safety' post-Hillsborough, it emerged as a 'movement of movements' (Mertes, 2004) by

way of being networked with the FSF and SD coalition and the broader commitment towards supporter democracy. In doing so, by 2004, *SAFE* had become a national Safe Standing campaign operating at the intersection of organised collective protest and unorganised individual protest (Edwards, 2014). Furthermore, it sought to build relational collective action in cultural and political environments which were shifting all the time throughout the course of 2002-2009 (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004). Goldstone (2004) describes these as 'external relational fields' and thus the chapter turns to discuss the symbolic and discursive spaces in which strategic interactions and tactics took place, during a period which saw the FSF and Supporters Direct grow as professional and European SMOs.

#### STAND UP, SIT DOWN: EAST LONDON NETWORKS AND RELATIONAL REPERTOIRES OF CONTENTION

Having formalised Safe Standing as a central FSF policy area within the *Fan's Blueprint for football* prior to the 2006 World Cup in Germany, Gatenby had secured the resources of the FSF as a networked SMO to mobilise greater support amongst affiliated ISAs and Supporters' Trusts. Whilst *SAFE* had emerged as a national campaign for Safe Standing after heightened political opportunities and constraints throughout 1999-2002, Gatenby began to realise that 'the authorities including the DCMS, the PL and the FLA were still opposed to debating Safe Standing' with supporter groups (notes from FSF *Fans Parliament*, 2004). According to Dave Boyle, this period was characterised by interactions which ultimately expressed a 'rawness' about Hillsborough:

When you said in 2001, but standing didn't cause Hillsborough it was the police, there was still an element of kind of ... they didn't disbelieve you but they couldn't quite say yeah it's true but that argument can't be made publicly. To actively advocate standing in 2001 set you against the police's official version of events that was accepted a conventional opinion and so whilst people might have intuitively been

pro-standing, to be pro-standing was in some way to be anti-police, and lots of people weren't ready to be that at that time just yet on this issue.

Dave Boyle (personal interview, 24 March 2016).

Whilst Hoey had been supportive of *SAFE* and the FSA led report into German football stadia, Richard Caborn, according to Gatenby, began every letter or conversation on Safe Standing with "I went to Hillsborough the morning after the disaster" (Gatenby, personal correspondence, 19 January 2018). Consequently, whilst the FSA and *CoFS* relational network had formalised 'safety as a framing mechanism' by campaigning for new (*SAFE*) Standing technology, many of the public television and radio debates which emerged during this *timescale* were still framed within the context of Hillsborough, the presumed behaviour of Liverpool supporters, and crowd safety. This created a powerful discourse which characterised Safe Standing debates as representing 'traditionalism vs. modernity' (Boyle, personal interview, 24 March 2016). In 2004, the FSF led Safe Standing network sought to deconstruct the crumbling terraces of the 1970s and 1980s hegemony and the social, political conditions out of which all-seating legislation emerged by tactically framing modern technology and consumerism as part of a post-Hillsborough and post-Premier League social world. In doing so, they recognised that opponents and the strategic interactions with them were multifaceted and complex across the DCMS, PL, and FLA relational fields. And whilst Hillsborough was a central issue which connected them, this period was for Malcolm Clarke characterised by a series of political interactions with opponents:

This was a period when we were sort of thinking we need to change politicians' minds. Phill spent a lot of time trying to deal with the FLA and this chap who was in charge of it called John De Quidt who was an arch opponent. And Phill must have spent years (2002 to 2009) exchanging emails and things with De Quidt and getting nowhere.

Malcolm Clarke (personal interview, 3 February 2018)

As a civil servant, John De Quidt had been the chief executive officer of the FLA for over fifteen years and was responsible for the licensing of all-seated stadia in the wake of the final Taylor report (Frosdick and Walley, 1997). In chapter 4, I documented the strategic interactions between De Quidt and Andy Walsh during a BBC Radio 5 debate in 1998 which reinforced the position of the FLA and the DCMS that seating must be seen within the context of appropriate and effective crowd measures. Three years later, the *SAFE* network, having successfully lobbied Kate Hoey, ensured the FLA would visit Germany to review the convertible/seating technology, but witnessed a strengthening of opposition through the reluctance to review the German model as legitimate ‘standing’ areas (Clarke and Gatenby, *FSF news*, May 2004). Throughout the course of 2004-2005, Gatenby’s email exchanges with De Quidt and the Minister for Sport, Richard Caborn, sought to agitate by ‘playing the game according to their rules’ (Gatenby, *FSF Annual Report*, 2004). Whilst the FLA rejected the applicability of the German convertible seating/standing models, Caborn stated that if new technology or designs were available in 2004, then he would be prepared to have them checked out by the FLA again.

Having learned of a new Safe Standing design by football fan and inventor Nick Jervis, Gatenby began networking with representatives of various Premier League and Football League clubs who were in the process of either developing existing stadia or looking to build new grounds. Unlike some of the German models which contained removable seats, the *Sporting Solution* backed design incorporated seats at a raised level which enabled those fans who chose to stand, to remain at the same height as those choosing to sit. For Jervis, who had also been liaising with local journalists and clubs on the South Coast, the design sought to ‘appease fans who want to stand and those who prefer to sit in a safe manner’ (*Daily Echo*, 2003). On 24 March 2004, Gatenby informed other members of an FSF email group that he had invited *Sporting Solutions* to attend the annual *FSF Fans Parliament* to showcase their design, which would form part of the planned Safe Standing

weekend workshop. Earlier that month, Gatenby had written to Caborn and the FLA arguing that the design represented ‘new evidence’, and in doing so mobilised a series of interactions which included inviting Ground Safety Officers and relevant Police Authorities to attend the conference and a planned demonstration in Bristol (*Safe Standing Report* Email, Gatenby, March 2004). Meanwhile, Gatenby sought to strengthen the ‘esprit de corps’ amongst members of both the FSF as a networked SMO and his own informal submerged network by facilitating a demonstration at Maine Road, Manchester, at which he attended with Malcolm Clarke and Mark Longden and Adam Brown from IMUSA (Brown, personal correspondence, 24 July 2018). McCarthy and Zald (1977) examined the role of skilled movement entrepreneurs within the mobilisation of resources as a response to a fluctuating market in preferences for social change (Edwards, 2014, p.55). According to Gatenby, as investors, Jervis and Pinson-Fleming made direct contact with the hope that he would sell their product or at least use the publicity as the basis to market the design abroad where the all-seated rule wasn’t in place (Gatenby, personal correspondence, 25 July 2018).

During the middle of this *timescale*, the mobilisation of Safe Standing emerged as a collective SMO strategy but with individual acts of protest (Jasper, 1997), operating both within and outside of the FSF. Gatenby expressed a collective discontent with the ambiguity of all-seating legislation and the approach of the FLA towards the problem of persistent standing and sought to engage with other bodies within the FLA’s own network, including the *Football Safety Officers Association* (FSOA) and the *Core Cities Group* (CCG) made up of various local authorities throughout England (Gatenby, *FSF annual report*, 2005). Whilst the *Sporting Solutions* design ultimately failed to convince the FLA that it met appropriate safety standards (Brown, personal correspondence, 24 July 2018), Gatenby believed he’d begun to isolate them on the issue of standing fans being forced to sit down, as more clubs were becoming vocal and public (Gatenby, *FSF annual report*,

2015). Moreover, this had led some other club-based supporter networks to engage in their own strategic interactions with clubs, local councils and safety advisory groups.

In early 2004 during a Championship match at West Ham United's Upton Park stadium, Newham Council, under pressure from the FLA, were threatening to close the Bobby Moore Stand Lower Tier due to persistent standing. Peter Caton, a former chemist and environmentalist from Upminster, Essex, had been a season ticket holder at West Ham for over thirty years. Caton had written a few articles for a West Ham fanzine and had begun to interact on the *Knees up Mother Brown* (KUMB) message board forum as a new online communicative space (Millward, 2008). Caton had joined the FSA many years prior having heard Rogan Taylor on the radio and often attended regional London branch meetings at one of the local universities (Caton, personal interview, 12 February, 2016). Nine years after the 'moral shock' (Jasper, 1997) felt in the K-stand at Old Trafford which agitated supporters to form IMUSA, Caton witnessed the ejection of some standing supporters by stewards in the Bobby Moore Stand. Having been previously agitated into collective action during the 1992 West Ham *Bond Scheme* protest, Caton had experienced a new 'trigger event' as a precipitating factor for activism (Smelser, 1962). In July 2004, after undertaking some initial research into the FLA led *Standing in Seated Areas at Football Grounds* (2001) publication, Caton concluded 'that a new standing campaign was needed with the aim of working with all those involved to gain agreement for supporters to stand in front of their seats in specified areas of all-seated grounds' (Caton, 2012, p.257). Whilst Gatenby and the FSF were involved in strategic interactions designed to introduce new Safe Standing technology, Caton's campaign sought to find a 'third way' solution by managing the problem of persistent standing in a way which would benefit both those wanting to stand and sit. To achieve this, the *Stand up Sit down* (SUSD) campaign aimed to prevent ongoing conflict between standing fans and stewards by identifying the 'most

suitable areas of football grounds for “managed standing in front of seats” and therefore preventing it occurring in steep upper tiers’.

Castells (2004) has examined the important role of the internet within 21st century protests, particularly the ways in which ICT-mediated networks create horizontal organisational structures and new online tactical opportunities. Online spaces such as message board forums operate as ‘fluid spaces of autonomy’ which are important in agitating wireless communication networks into more physical spaces of interaction and protest (Cleland et al. 2018). Like *Bring Back Terracing* and *SAFE*, *SUSD* emerged from a sense of social unrest expressed by club-specific networks and contexts which supports King’s (2003) critique of ISAs being a more powerful channel for supporter agitation and collective action in deregulated environments. However, *SUSD* sought to combine localised grassroots activism with online mobilisations by becoming an internet based national campaign (Caton, 2012). Chapter 4 demonstrated how aggrieved supporters’ groups do not have to always rely on the external injection of resources because they possess a rich array within their own social networks (McAdam, 1982). At West Ham, Caton, by using *KUMB* to appeal for IT support, formed a tie with a website designer who helped set up the *SUSD* website with a link to an online petition and emailing list. This was then promoted via other football supporter message board forums across the country and within a few weeks, *SUSD* had received both local and national press coverage with several fanzines carrying articles about the campaign (Caton, 2012). During this period, a fellow West Ham season ticket holder and supporter of social justice, Amanda Matthews (now Jacks) upon reading about *SUSD* on *KUMB*, exchanged a few supportive emails with Caton before meeting him outside the ‘chicken run’ (the name given to the East Stand at Upton Park). This formed an important strong tie which saw Jacks become formally involved with *SUSD* as both an activist and ‘soft’ leader alongside Caton (Jacks, personal interview, 12 February, 2016).

*SUSD* had two initial goals; firstly it demonstrated a broader social unrest towards the problem and treatment of supporters persistently standing in all-seated areas and secondly, in doing so, it aimed to work behind the scenes with the various people involved, including the DCMS, FLA, and representatives from the Fire, Police and Ambulance services, (Caton, 2012). These interactions inevitably connected both the *SUSD* and FSF's Safe Standing networks and fields because they formed ties with the same people such as Richard Caborn, John De Quidt and other stakeholders in the football industry. As a former FSA member, Caton was familiar with the FSF Safe Standing campaign and after a series of phone calls with Gatenby and Boyle, was invited to present *SUSD*'s proposals to the FSF national council. At the 2005 FSF *Fans' Parliament*, Gatenby captured a renewed 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim, 1915) having established new relationships and interactions during the fifth year of campaigning:

The Safe Standing campaign goes from strength to strength, gaining valuable in-roads and supportive contacts - though at the top end of the scale those in authority have once again refused to concede an inch over the debate. Meetings with the FSF and *SUSD* have taken place with both the FLA and the CCG. If we keep up the pressure and continue to work strongly with groups such as *SUSD* and individual fans become more vocal too then the change will come quickly.

Phill Gatenby (FSF annual report and *Fans Parliament* conference agenda, 2005).

According to Byrne (1997), what characterises social movements as being distinct from other forms of political action, lies in 'what they do', specifically the range of tactics they use or adopt. Tilly (1978; 1986; 1995) refers to these tactics as 'repertoires of contention', which are the 'product of interactions between actors, and are diffused to other similar minded groups who adapt and use them for their own means' (Cleland et al, 2018, p.44). And these tactics, for Jasper (1997) and Goodwin and Jasper (2004), are important mechanisms which enable activists to emotionally connect to protest and produce their own 'political' opportunities through their 'creative strategies'. If tactics are successfully



diffused, they ‘set in train a sequential process leading to new forms of coordination and contentious activity’ (Gillan, 2018, p.6).

Throughout the course of 2005-2008, the FSF Safe Standing and *SUSD* campaigns formed a relational network and in doing so developed relational tactics and innovations across contentious episodes of claim making between them and their opponents (Edwards, 2014). Having produced a report titled *Standing in Seated Areas: Proposal to Improve Safety for Football Supporters* in June 2005, *SUSD* continued to strategically interact with the FLA, DCMS and politicians from all three major political parties, but saw them as one ‘player’ within an ‘arena’ (Jasper and Duyvendak, 2015), rather than the state being *the* direct opponent. The report focused on several areas, notably, ‘safety’, ‘customer care’, and ‘crowd control’ and these were important framing mechanisms which became part of a Safe Standing group convention (Becker, 1974). By identifying a range of ‘players’ within football clubs, such as Chief Executives, Stadium Managers, Managing Directors and club specific supporter networks, *SUSD* engaged in new *localised* strategic interactions as a counter-power repertoire of contention:

We started with the supporters - you’ve got to get the supporters and then clubs onside .... And then the media was a bit of a side thing. We tried politicians but it’s got to come from the fans first, then the clubs, then the football authorities.

Peter Caton, (personal interview, 12 February 2016).

Copies of the report were thus sent to all professional clubs in the top two divisions and the football authorities in both England and Scotland (Caton, 2012) producing new interactions and relationships which both weakened and strengthened the power of the FLA. In a piece titled *Stand to Reason* in WSC in December 2005, Amanda Jacks captured this noting:

At *SUSD* we’ve spoken to a number of people within the game, including club chairmen, safety officers and individual police officers who back our objectives. Yet very few will allow us to quote them on the record as they fear a reaction from the FLA and safety authorities. Last season the managing director of a Championship club voiced support for our initiative and urged fans to do likewise. Shortly

afterwards he was told by his local safety advisory group that his opinions on the issue should not be aired.

Amanda Jacks, (WSC, December 2005)

According to Caton (2012), the FLA eventually submitted the *SUSD* dossier and proposals to Richard Caborn but with a recommendation that he did not accept them. Nonetheless, Gatenby recognised that *SUSD* had begun to successfully identify a range of clubs who were supportive of the *SUSD* and FSF led campaigns, both publicly and privately (Gatenby, FSF annual report, *Fans Parliament* 2006). Moreover, they collectively sought to develop a new strategy of liaising with clubs who retained existing terraces outside the top two divisions in England and Wales by looking at what could be done to protect them should they be promoted to the Championship (notes from Gatenby FSF annual report 2006; Caton, 2012). In doing so, *SUSD* and the FSF Safe Standing network engaged in relational collective action through a context of interdependence (Edwards, 2014) which further strengthened the relations between the FSF as a SMO and the more informal Gatenby-Caton-Jacks coalition network. And together, in 2005, *SUSD* and the FSF began working on a new two year report into the legal and technical aspects of the all-seating legislation with the aim of ‘creating a powerful document as evidence in support of introducing standing areas into stadiums in England and Wales’ (Gatenby, *FSF annual report* 2007).

#### REPROGRAMMING NEW LOGICS OF ‘RAIL SEATING’

As the FSF prepared its international work for the 2006 World Cup in Germany it continued to pursue the long-term objective of becoming a highly professionalised SMO by commissioning a CAPITA led report into the internal and external perception of the organisation (Clarke, *FSF Annual Report*, 2005). As the largest business process outsourcing and professional services company in the UK, CAPITA identified a series of organisational strengths and weaknesses which were subsequently incorporated into a new

FSF Development plan produced by Steven Powell at the Kingsmeadow Fans' Stadium in Kingston-upon-Thames. In 2004, Kingsmeadow, the home of the community-based club, AFC Wimbledon, replaced Highbury as the official FSF national headquarters. The development plan predominantly focused on obtaining further external funding, the employment of more staff to supplement the commitment of volunteers, and a new communications strategy which aimed to promote the FSF to a wider audience beyond its membership (FSF *Development Plan*, 2005). To achieve this, the FSF aimed to build relationships with fanzine sellers, newsagents and their wider social networks in order to further develop its own magazine and the website as a source advertising revenue (Clarke, FSF *annual report*, 2005). As FSF Communications Officer since 2003, fanzine writer Peter Daykin had a prior social tie to Mark Longden having interviewed him for a piece on Safe Standing in *ALS* which became an important 'conversational network' (Crossley and Ibrahim, 2012):

We were both having a good moan about the things we'd lost and I was sitting there thinking, yeah this is important .... I do agree with him and I see standing as a cut through issue and I think you get standing right you solve a lot of other issues in football like access to tickets for the economically disadvantaged, gender and racial inclusion, atmospheres and general fun as well ... and I thought I need to get involved with this.

Peter Daykin (personal interview, 20 January 2016).

Daykin's recruitment to the FSF was thus based on both an understanding of a 'golden (authentic) age of football' (King, 1998) and a 'situational' definition of 'modern' football and all-seating legislation. And having been agitated into joining whilst working as the director of a creative marketing agency, Daykin was elected to the FSF national council in 2003 and used his social capital to develop the FSF magazine and website whilst also moderating the FSF internal email group (FSF *National Council minutes*, 12 October 2003). *FSF news* was once again re-branded as *The Football Supporter*, connecting both *timescales* and the social worlds of the FSA, NFFSC and FSF. During this time, Daykin

formed a tie with Kevin Miles who had also worked in publishing having become a director of the general commercial company; *Marks Brothers Ltd* in 2000 (*Companies House*, 288a). As both were based in the North East, Daykin and Miles worked together to develop the FSF communication infrastructure and in April 2005 this tie was strengthened when they became joint directors of the private company *A19 Ltd*, set up by Daykin in Sunderland (*Companies House*, 10ef). To achieve the objective of developing the FSF's website, the federation formed a partnership with *A19* and in doing so, loaned them £10k from its development fund which would be repaid once income was generated, with additional profits being split 50/50 (*FSF Annual Report*, 2005). This formed a similar agreement to that between the FSF and its emerging international network via FSI and the design of the FSI website (Daykin, *FSF Annual Report*, 2005).

In chapter 4, I historicised the international work of the FSA and the recruitment of Miles as lead international officer in order to document important connections and interactions across both *timescales* and emerging political opportunities and constraints. As an important switcher, Miles was fluent in German and had successfully connected and coordinated German, Dutch, Italian, Polish, Swiss and UK fan networks and projects, becoming a central node within the development of the *FSI* network. This first developed out of the 'collaboration of several, very different fan-related organisations in providing "fans' embassy" advice, information and support services for football supporters at major international tournaments' (Football Fans Congress, 2008). At the 2006 World Cup, 'an even larger number of FSI Fans' Embassy teams travelled to Germany to assist supporters, side-by-side with the newly introduced stationary Fans Embassies' (FSE Fans Embassies). Whilst Miles was well known amongst wider international fan networks, he also played an important role in connecting submerged England supporters' networks across various regions and helping recruit new members to the FSF. As head of the Yorkshire England Supporters group, Martin O'Hara, an international sales officer and Doncaster Rovers

supporter, travelled to Germany for the 2006 World Cup and was part of a team which arranged a cricket match between England and Trinidad and Tobago supporters ahead of their World Cup group stage fixture (O'Hara, personal interview, 29 January 2016). Through this international supporters' relations work, O'Hara formed a tie with Alan Bloore, a Barnsley supporter and Deputy Chair of the FSF who had been working with Miles on the FSF Fans Embassies and it was through this connection that O'Hara became more formally involved with FSI and later the FSF:

From volunteering to run the Yorkshire England Supporters group I started getting invited to meetings with the FA, the football police unit .... And of course I used to talk to Kev (Miles) on a regular basis but I wasn't part of the FSF at that point .... but (through this network) I knew everyone that was, so Kev being Kev and then Alan Bloore and lots of other people at the time who were running these fans groups' through the FSF and it was from this that I was eventually elected onto the FSF national council.

Martin O'Hara (personal interview, 29 January 2016).

Miles, as leader of the International Fan Embassies, thus acted as a type of 'recruitment agent' (McAdam, 1986), positively influencing the likelihood of individuals within this social network to become part of the wider FSF movement and collective action (Cleland et al. 2018). And a couple of years later in July 2008, Miles played a central role in bringing together the international networks of national and club specific bouts of collective action at the first *European Football Fans Congress* hosted by the FSF at Arsenal's Emirates stadium. As a result, these networks worked together to form an independent, representative and democratically organised grassroots organisation; *Football Supporters Europe* (FSE) (Cleland et al, 2018), representing an important mobilisation from King's (2003) discussion of transnational fan relations and networks.

It was this international context and the role of England supporter networks which played a critical role in creating what Tarrow conceptualised as a new 'protest cycle' or

wave of collective action (1998) on Safe Standing during the end of this *timescale*. As Dave

Boyle expressed:

What are the other factors which have helped it take time (for Safe Standing to mobilise)? I'm bound to say the Germany World Cup in 2006 .... Whilst as I noted we couldn't get people interested in 2004, well after the World Cup .... fans from England go over and suddenly they realise they've spent a lot of time ignorantly being dismissive of German football and there was an element of suddenly the German model of Safe Standing started to become much more understood, partly through sedimentary accretion but a massive part was the turnaround in perception of German football (and stadia) after the World Cup in 2006 ... people saw these stadia and realised that they were fucking big great stadiums, they were brand new and better than English stadiums and they were built to incorporate standing. A long time was spent trying to persuade people with sweet reason and its bollocks .... people needed to feel that standing was better and was possible and that didn't really happen until they saw it with their own free eyes in places like Germany at the World Cup and those people come back ... and a lot of England fans are not followers of Premier League clubs and were arguably one of the groups who were blasé about the whole issue of Safe Standing.

Dave Boyle (personal interview, 24 March 2016)

Throughout the course of 1999-2009, the *CoFS*, FSA-FSF and *SAFE*-Safe Standing relational networks had centralised German football stadia as a key repertoire of contention within the strategic interactions across the DCMS and the FLA relational fields. Miles and Walsh's connection to Stuart Dykes was an important strong tie which helped the FSF secure a free of charge translation of the *Deutsche Fußball Bund* (DFB) report on standing at football which Gatenby, Powell and Caton incorporated into their working report on the case for Safe Standing in England and Wales (Powell, minutes from FSF National Council, February 2007).

As Boyle notes, however, the 2006 World Cup was important because it connected the emerging discourse of Safe Standing and German Stadia with a wider network of England supporters not limited to the FSF or Premier League clubs. And from these interactions, the Safe Standing relational movement sought to 'reinterpret its socio-political environment' and engage in what Gillan (2018) referred to as a 'hermeneutic tug of war over events (in German football)', which moved beyond centralising the 2006 World Cup

as a historically significant ‘event’ (Sewell, 2005), to instead presenting German football stadia as *the* Safe Standing ‘master frame’ (Snow and Benford, 1992). Consequently, in 2007, the FSF funded Gatenby to return to Germany and report on three games at Schalke, Borussia Dortmund and Werder Bremen by further investigating the different standing area designs alongside other issues such as persistent standing in seated areas, provision for disabled fans, atmosphere and ground dynamics and accident and injury statistics. Gatenby, upon speaking to a large number of supporters, stadium managers, safety officials and local authorities, presented his findings at the fifth annual FSF conference on Saturday 9 June 2007 held at Crewe Alexandra FC, and in issue 5 of *The Football Supporter*. Meanwhile, to further prepare for its Safe Standing report, the FSF worked closely with a market research company; *Football Fans Central Ltd* to conduct a national Safe Standing survey of 2,046 football fans across all clubs in the Premier League and Football League. This survey; *the Football Fans Census* revealed over 90 per cent of those sampled believed ‘fans should be given the freedom to choose whether they stand (in safe standing areas) or sit inside football grounds’. These reports alongside various pieces in national newspapers and *WSC* (Gatenby, personal correspondence, 19 January 2018) produced a series of new strategic interactions between the FSF, Richard Caborn and John De Quidt on the technical issues of introducing German designed Safe Standing in English football.

Additionally, the FSF and *SUSD* relational networks encouraged affiliated supporters’ groups and members to write to their Member of Parliament seeking to create new political opportunities for Safe Standing post-2006 World Cup (Clarke, *The Football Supporter* 2007; Caton, 2012). For Goodwin and Jasper (2004, p.12), such political opportunities are ‘windows which expand and contract according to (relational) situations that arise’. In November 2006, the Liberal Democrat MP and Portsmouth supporter, Mike Hancock, opened a political window by tabling a new EDM in parliament which urged the UK government to re-examine the case for introducing small, limited sections of Safe

Standing areas at football based on improvements in (German) stadium design and technology. Sponsored by Kate Hoey, the EDM received 145 cross-party signatures, representing the largest number of MP's in support of Standing Areas at Football Grounds by 2007. One year later in September 2008 at the Liberal Democratic Autumn Conference, Peter Jones, chairman of Chiltern Liberal Democrats and a season ticket holder at Wycombe Wanderers, worked with the FSF to outline a policy motion for Safe Standing at Football Matches, identifying German Safe Standing areas as 'operating safely and successfully' and called on the government to direct the FLA to 'prepare suitable guidance under which domestic football clubs, working with their supporters, may introduce Safe Standing areas' (Liberal Democrats, 2018). FSF chair, Malcolm Clarke welcomed the move noting:

We congratulate the Liberal Democrats' decision to debate Safe Standing and would encourage all political parties to follow suit. Safe Standing isn't just about those who wish to stand, it's about those who want to sit and view the match in comfort too. Many have their enjoyment spoiled by those who wish to stand.

Malcolm Clarke (cited in Slater, 2008)

On the 14 September 2008, the Liberal Democrats gave their formal backing to Safe Standing following the policy vote at the conference and as the parties' Shadow Culture, Media and Sport Secretary, Don Foster claimed:

If fans want to stand and clubs want to let them, we should at least explore safe ways of achieving it. This is a sensitive issue but we cannot ignore the large numbers of fans who want to stand and are doing so in seating areas despite existing regulations and the danger it causes. Given the seeming impossibility of policing existing regulations, and recognising that some passionate fans want to be able to jump up and down, then we need to look at technologies that allow them to that safely.

Don Foster (FSF, 2008)

During the course of 2002-2008, the FSF as a networked SMO developed repertoires of contention which themselves were a product of the imagination, passion and creativity of supporters' networks (Jasper, 1997). This is important because it recognises key political



opportunities in 2008 as not themselves defining the world around Safe Standing but rather captures the cultural processes as constructing alternative frames of interpretation or what Castells (2015) referred to as programming logics. Whilst *SUSD* worked alongside the FSF Safe Standing campaign to focus on managed standing in seated areas, they both utilised skills within their own networks to help convince a growing number of politicians and journalists of new technology and the weakness of the FLA's 'safety' argument.

Central to this was Barnet FC supporter, Chris Nash, who formed a strong tie with Caton and Jacks having learned of *SUSD* on its discussion forum (Nash, personal interview, 3 May 2016). Nash had been agitated into joining *SUSD* after experiencing his own moral shock at the heavy policing of supporters in all-seated stands in 2005 after Barnet were promoted to the Football League. Over the next few years, Nash met Caton and Jacks every couple of months at the White Hart pub outside Liverpool Street station in London and became familiar with both the *SUSD* report into managed standing and the FSF's *Safe Standing Report* (Caton, 2012). Having an accountant's 'analytical mind', Nash began work on an in-depth analysis of the injury statistics being used by the FLA and DCMS to support their claim that standing is less safe than sitting (Caton, 2012). Nash's report showed that the data used to support this claim from injury figures collated annually by the FLA was unreliable based on several factors such as the 'inclusion of games played abroad, endemic errors in the attendance data, and the failure to copy down figures from club returns properly'. For Nash, 'without proper data, the arguments based on the data were like a house built on sand, until the FLA could produce some proper evidence, they (and the DCMS) should stop using the injury statistic numbers to support their claim that all-seated stadia are safer than grounds with standing areas' (*Nash Report*, December 2008). In March 2009, Malcolm Clarke sent Nash's report to Sir Michael Scholar, chair of the UK Statistics Authority in London seeking assistance in ensuring that the FLA ceased to use its data in the way in which it previously had. Whilst the FLA's tone was 'dismissive',

describing the FSF as a ‘small vocal pressure group’, Nash’s report had successfully highlighted some inaccuracies which the FLA were forced to accept (Caton, 2012). However, for Nash whilst this work agitated some collective action against the FLA and its safety discourse, ultimately it was the ‘changing of imagery around Safe Standing (by focusing on Rail Seating) and the influencing the right people’ which tactically began to have an impact during the end of this *timescale* (Nash, personal interview 3 May 2016). And in September 2009, Caton, Jacks, Nash and Stuart Wood who had run the *SUSD* online forum met members of the FSF Safe Standing network in the Sadler’s Club at Walsall F.C. and agreed to merge the campaigns. Consequently, Safe Standing incorporated ‘managed standing in front of seats as an interim solution’ within a movement which had begun to program Rail Seating as its primary goal.

In 2009, the FSF held its annual Fans Parliament in Newcastle and elected Amanda Jacks, Mark Longden and Peter Daykin to its executive committee. Meanwhile, Gatenby stood down from the FSF National Council and Safe Standing campaign upon moving to America for family reasons and feeling ‘battle weary after fighting the same arguments over and over’ (Gatenby, personal correspondence, 25 July 2018). However, capturing the strong relations he’d help build between IMUSA and Safe Standing over the past ten years, Colin Hendrie, an associate professor of Human and Animal Ethology at the University of Leeds and vice-chair of IMUSA, joined Longden to take a more active role within the FSF. In doing so, he worked closely with Jacks to propose a Safe Standing trial for at least one (new or redesigned) football ground in the third and fourth tiers of English football, League One and Two to be permitted to have a fully funded Safe Standing area which would be based on the Rail Seat model at Werder Bremen (*FSF conference minutes*, 2009). At the conference, to further evidence the reprogramming logics of Rail Seating for collective action, Hendrie and Jacks worked with the Safe Standing and *SUSD* networks to develop an FSF led *Safe Standing policy group* which would focus on Germany and Austria as the

central areas of best practice within a new extensive advertisement campaign at the beginning of the third *timescale*.

## CONCLUSION

The importance of networks and relationships within football supporter communities and cultures should not be understated. These connections matter. Whilst many supporter networks continue to be parochial and primarily concerned with club-specific issues, the capacity to build coalitions and produce relational collective action is critical to fans becoming effective political actors in the game. In this chapter, I showed how the switching of core networks across the FSA, football fanzine and ISA movements in chapter 4 became an important mechanism to build the first professionalised football supporter SMO across 1999-2009. And whilst the FSF itself did not agitate the Safe Standing movement, it did provide an avenue through which more formalised movement activities and conventions could be channelled and mobilised. This is important because the chapter recognised that movement leadership is a complex phenomenon which encompasses both unorganised, grassroots activism, and organised, institutional positions of influence. In this chapter, I argued the FSF, as a SMO, became an influential movement coordinator and in doing so, contained a number of ‘soft leaders’ who held positions of social, cultural and political influence on Safe Standing across this *timescale*. These ‘leaders’, networked by way of prior social ties across the FSA-*CoFS*-ISA relational fields, sought the cooperation of other networks such as FSI, England Supporters Groups and West Ham’s *SUSD* by sharing common goals and resources to develop counter-repertoires of contention against the all-seating legislation. And so the core argument of this chapter, was that to understand the growth of a national football supporter SMO and its strategy of developing closer relationships with key figures inside the government, FA and PL, attention must be paid to the micro-level networks and interactions which themselves create those strategic interactions. And in doing so, move football supporter movements like Safe Standing in particular directions which are subject to dominant social discourses. Across this *timescale*, the switching and programming of Safe Standing across multiple ‘nodal materialities’, such

as German football supporter networks, *SAFE*, the FSF, the DCMS, the PL, the FA and the FL, was achieved through the collaborative actions of a small number of supporters within IMUSA and the *CoFS*. Together, with the FSF and SD, they developed coalition based collective action which identified German football as both a political and cultural opportunity to shape debates around supporter ownership and Safe Standing. Consequently, they successfully reprogrammed Rail Seating as *the* Safe Standing master frame and in turn widened the strategic interactions beyond the state, to club chairmen, supporter groups, local safety officers and police associations. The chapter argued that this enabled the framing of ‘safety’ itself to become central within those strategic interactions, which further evidenced the ways in which supporter activists are embedded within such dominant social discourses, and often employ categories and ideas that they provide (Steinberg, 1999).

Finally, the successful diffusion of German Rail Seating as a transformative Safe Standing frame of interpretation, created new opportunities in which the Safe Standing movement negotiated a shifting socio-political environment. This was in part achieved by FSF led group conventions and emerging political opportunities, but also because the persistent standing of supporters in all-seated stadia as a form of ‘misbehaviour’ to subvert the cultural pattern and ritual of watching football, captured supporters’ symbolic struggle at specific clubs. And thus I argued in this chapter, Rail Seating became part of a ‘collective’ strategy for expressing discontent with the all-seating legislation as a form of social control. In the next chapter, I show how this strategy was successfully switched with other social and political groups across 2009-2019.

## CHAPTER SIX

2009 – 2019

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I argue, that thirty four years after the FSA emerged in Liverpool as a movement to ‘reclaim the game’ and transform the landscape of fan politics in England, the FSF is now, broadly speaking, an effective campaigning SMO with some influence inside the football industry. This transformation is situated within the wider context of ‘Third Way’ politics and shaped by actors hailing from the creative class with higher levels of formal education. However, whilst new networks have played an important role in building new corporate partnerships and commercial revenue streams, which in turn have enhanced the creativity and marketing of the Safe Standing movement, the small core FSF national committee network continues to be coordinated by central players who were either leading members of the *CoFS*, ISAs, football fanzine writers, and the FSA during the first two *timescales*. And as recruitment agents, they produce movement *action* in ways which are patterned by past activities, and in turn and shape football supporter culture and capital (Gillan, 2018). At the heart of this transformation, has been an effective attempt to build diplomacy with key figures inside the governance of professional football and in doing so, establish new political relationships with the DCMS, PL, FL, FA, and SGSA. However, whilst these macro-level strategic interactions played an important role in ensuring the Safe Standing movement made its way to the inside of English football’s commodity structure and governance, this was also achieved by micro-level mobilisations within, and around, professional football clubs, during a changing political landscape on Hillsborough.

And thus the chapter argues that, whilst the state and its sub-actors are important political structures which both open and close opportunities for successful movement

mobilisation, it is these micro-level human actions of networked supporter activists who successfully create new political opportunities. To achieve this, I argue that a small core FSF *Safe Standing network* helped build a critical mass of club-specific supporter groups across the PL and FL across this *timescale*, and in doing so, connected well-resourced supporters with political, cultural and technological capital to agitate others within local contexts. Consequently, the chapter shows how Safe Standing as a networked social movement has become part of a hyperdigitalization of football culture through accelerated levels of digital literacy amongst supporters within and around the FSF and SD. These networks are switched between the FSF and independent supporter groups, producing relational protests which further complicate the collective and individual dimensions of movement action. Together, these networks are characterised by a culture of fan engagement which corporatises Safe Standing through social entrepreneurship. I argue in this chapter, that emerging late modern supporter protest movements are producing coalitions which seek to challenge the capitalist logics of modern football, but the digital platforms in which they are embedded, both consume and produce late modern football culture.

The core contribution of this chapter is to show how Safe Standing, as a movement *for* Rail Seating, successfully switched together disparate supporter groups in Scotland and Wales and thus demonstrated the impact of collaborative actions of networks which are switched together at specific moments in time. However, during this *timescale*, whilst a small online FSF *Safe Standing network*, as a working utopia, produced interactive symbolic spaces made up of new conventions and tactics, many of the micro-level supporter interactions across multiple online platforms are producing rhizomatic networks and leaderless relational collective action. Moreover, there have been some disagreements amongst key actors as to whether ‘safety’ as opposed to ‘choice’ should remain the focus of the movement. This further evidences the ways in which collective identity may not

always be a realistically achievable feature of movements which involve connections between diverse supporter groups with overlapping but also different vested interests (Edwards, 2014).



## ‘A LOVE SUPREME’: NORTH EAST NETWORKS AND BUILDING DIPLOMACY

I often try to say to people, well, being right isn't enough .... There's no point in being right if you can't actually change things, so it's also about tactics and being politically clever and all of this, it's not just about passing resolutions in meetings and then not having a strategy to try and implement them or achieve changes in football. For a long time, we mistakenly thought that what the big priority needed to be was to change politicians' minds so that we could get the law altered. I think we realised that us trying to change politicians' minds was never going to be enough, so we did have to work more closely and talk to individual football clubs and key people in the football industry. And in a different kind of way.

Malcolm Clarke (personal interview, 3 February 2016)

In chapter 5, I documented how the growth of the FSF as a professionalised London-based SMO was characterised by the need to develop closer working relationships with key figures inside the government, FA and the PL, and that this must be seen within the wider context of 'Third Way' politics and supporters' relations with the game during the early twenty-first century. The chapter showed how central nodes within both the FSF and FSI/FSE relational networks such as Kevin Miles and Malcolm Clarke were important in building diplomacy by engaging in 'behind the scenes lobbying' which some smaller supporter networks were unable to achieve. One of the mechanisms which helped build the profile and communication infrastructure of the FSF and FSI was the recruitment of former fanzine writer Peter Daykin and the partnership with *A19 Ltd*. And in 2009 at the Fans Parliament in Newcastle, *A19* and the publication of the *Football Supporter* were crucial in changing how the FSF communicated as a more electronic based organization (*The Football Supporter*, Issue 17, 2009). This ensured the FSF was able to connect and interact with tens of thousands more fans than its members and sought to generate a more inclusive and web based textured football culture.

The publication of *The Football Supporter* and *A19* connected Daykin and Miles to other commercial based networks and fanzine writers which included Sunderland supporters Jez Robinson, David Rose, Jonathan Wilson and Michael Brunskill. Robinson

had co-created the Sunderland fanzine ‘*A Love Supreme*’ (*ALS*) with Martyn McFadden in 1989 and was a member of the FSF *Football Supporters Northeast* alongside Daykin and Brunskill (*FSF news*, May 2008). Like Daykin, Brunskill had also worked for *ALS* when studying journalism at the University of Sunderland and was already weakly tied to Kevin Miles. It was this relationship? which agitated Brunskill into getting involved with the FSF after *ALS* were invited to an FSF North East protest event against the proposal to introduce an international ‘*Game 39*’ within the PL’s fixture schedule (Brunskill, personal interview, 27 January 2016). Meanwhile, Daykin’s connection to Jonathan Wilson, a sports journalist for the *Guardian*, *Independent* and *Sports Illustrated* and author of ‘*Sunderland: A Club Transformed*’ (2007) and ‘*Inverting the Pyramid: The History of Football Tactics*’ (2008) was formed at high school, and this tie led Wilson to becoming involved with the FSF’s *The Football Supporter* in 2009 alongside Brunskill and Rose, with the latter joining Daykin and Miles as a director of *A19* in 2011. And later that year, these mutually influencing connections and interactions produced a new digital quarterly football magazine; *The Blizzard* published by *Blizzard Media Ltd* who were based at Ashmore Terrace in Sunderland (*Companies House*: 07822043).

During the start of this *timescale*, these interactions became an important mechanism for further professionalising the FSF as a SMO and recruiting new North East based nodes to the core Safe Standing network. Central to this was the relocation of the FSF office to *The Blizzard* headquarters at Ashmore Terrace in Sunderland after *A19* dissolved and became *FSF Services Ltd* which, according to Amanda Jacks, became ‘the administrative arm of the FSF’ (personal interview, 12 February 2016). For Brunskill, this helped set up the FSF as a ‘driving force for more direct action and activity’ (personal interview, 27 January 2016) through the recruitment of formal paid staffing roles in 2010, to which he and Rose were appointed as Director of Communications and Corporate Relations Manager, alongside Nina Donkin as Administration officer and Garreth

Cummins, a Liverpool supporter and member of the production team at *The Blizzard* as International and New Media officer. And as noted in chapters 4 and 5, these relational networks reflect how many social movements have influential roles which hail from the ‘creative class’ (Florida, 2002) who create new ideas, technology and content which require higher levels of former education and cultural capital (Cleland et al. 2018).

The North East networks played an important role in organising the FSF *Fans Parliament* at the Live Theatre in Newcastle in 2009 where Malcolm Clarke acknowledged the contribution made by the new office in Sunderland in providing an ‘effective 9 to 5 and beyond service to the media and individual supporters’ (FSF AGM notes, 2009). In doing so, he also recognised the growing importance of Message Boards and Social Networking sites as new spaces for communication both with activists and much larger numbers of supporters. And so throughout the course of 2009 to 2011, *FSF Services Ltd* worked on developing its cyberspace presence alongside an effective press and PR strategy and building corporate partnerships and new commercial revenue streams (Daykin, FSF AGM notes 2009). To achieve this, Daykin acted as a ‘soft leader’ (Aronowitz, 2003; Della Porta and Diani, 2006) in using these creative networks to further develop the FSF’s campaigning infrastructure. And one of the ways he did this was to chair the Safe Standing breakout session at the Fans Parliament in 2010 and help mobilise the merged FSF-*SUSD* network in developing new strategic priorities, which included an FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* and new sources of advertisement (FSF *Fans Parliament* 2010). Furthermore, informed by the North East networks’ fanzine culture and creative capital, the Sunderland office added a *Safe Standing petition* to its new website and began working on strategies to introduce greater visual creativity into the marketing of the campaign.

Having worked closely with Amanda Jacks and *SUSD* to develop the FSF *Safe Standing Policy* group, Colin Hendrie, vice-chair of *IMUSA* replaced Gatenby as interim coordinator of the Safe Standing network and helped develop the merge with *SUSD* during

a political landscape which saw the Liberal Democrats reaffirm their policy commitment alongside the appointment of a new Sports Minister, Hugh Robertson, and new chair of the FLA, Ruth Shaw. However, having played a critical role during the FSF-*SUSD*'s strategic interactions with the FLA on injury statistics, Chris Nash was elected onto the FSF's National Council in 2010 and took over coordination of the Safe Standing network which comprised of Jacks, Stuart Wood, Malcolm Clarke, Martin O'Hara, Michael Brunskill, Peter Daykin, David Rose, and Peter Caton. This network worked closely with Don Foster to further pursue tactics at a political level, and Jacks' FSF work on policing and stewarding ensured she was weakly tied to eminent socio-legal academics such as Guy Osborn, Geoff Pearson, Steve Frosdick, Mark James and Clifford Stott on issues pertaining to football legislation and policing. These connections were important in helping the Safe Standing network strengthen political relationships and acquire greater knowledge of complexities with the all-seating legislation.

Whilst *SUSD* remained a central node within the Safe Standing network in 2011, Nash stood down as coordinator due to demanding professional commitments and was replaced by Daykin as Safe Standing Portfolio Holder and Workshop Chair (Daykin, personal interview 20 January 2016). This became a mechanism for building on the direct action of Gatenby and the FSF-*SUSD* relational networks but in a way which was characterised by the diplomacy and relationship building tactics used by Miles and Clarke during strategic interactions with the FLA, PL and FA. As Daykin and Brunskill both expressed:

The debate wasn't going anywhere, well basically it wasn't a debate ... what happened was, on the one hand you had Phill and a few other people constantly writing letters to people like John De Quidt and the government and the PL, the FL and the police telling them why this wasn't working and why they were wrong and you had all these people writing back saying why we were wrong and why we didn't want to go back to the terraces of the 1970s and we were all hooligans and we didn't know what we were talking about, and for eight or nine years you had this kind of almost cold war where nothing was changing, nobody was listening and both sides of the debate were completely entrenched and Phill must have written a million letters

and got really angry why nobody was listening and so when I took over ... the first thing we did was take a step back and set about trying to make relationships with people and engage them in dialogue, do a bit of listening and slowly help them understand we're trying to change the game for the better.

Peter Daykin (personal interview, 21 January 2016)

In principle, the FSF had always supported Safe Standing and there had been bits and bobs of campaign work but I think that it was to an extent a bit outside the football world shouting in and I think what needed to happen at the time was to get into clubs a bit more and to get in the institutions in football such as the PL, the FL and the FA and to talk about Safe Standing to them and so there was a bit of a strategy around about 2010 to 2011 where we would try and win over clubs individually and I think the FSF was able to start doing that.

Michael Brunskill (personal interview, 27 January 2016)

As I discussed during the previous two chapters, Goldstone's (2004) concept of 'external relational fields' is useful to capture how the environment in which social movements operate is not static, but rather continually shifting as a result of those strategic interactions which take place between various players. Indeed, in 2011, the core Safe Standing network formed new relationships with the SGSA as a result of a strategic willingness to do so and because key personnel within that environment had changed. As Daykin noted, 'Ruth Shaw's appointment in replacing John De Quidt helped improve dialogue with the SGSA as a "critical friend" and ensured a cooperative, fact-based and courteous approach to discussions on Safe Standing (FSF *Annual Report*, 2012).

This importance of relationship building and strategic diplomacy was also characterised by a broader social and political transformation during the start of this *timescale*, which examined the problems of governance and sustainability in English Football. This resulted in the *DCMS Select Committee* commissioning an inquiry in 2010 to which Malcolm Clarke, Dave Boyle and Steven Powell gave evidence, leading to the production of a DCMS report in July 2011. Informed by 'Third Way' politics, the report recommended the introduction of a formal licensing model to underpin the self-regulation measures introduced by the PL and FL, and various other initiatives which sought to protect

the future of Supporters Trusts and Supporters Direct and address issues of funding and legislation (*House of Commons*, 2011). As a result, both the FSF and SD looked to develop new income streams with the view to becoming financially independent of the PL, whilst ensuring that supporters held an influential and constructive voice within football by continuing to build relationships and work in collaboration. (Kevin Miles, *FSF Annual Report*, 2013). Consequently, the FSF and SD came together to host a jointly organised *Fans' Weekend* in July 2012 and this became the catalyst for regular joint conferences at the annual *Fans Parliament* and initial discussions about whether it would be in the long term interests of supporters to merge the two organisations (Clarke, *FSF Annual Report* 2013). These interactions were important because they strengthened Clarke and Miles as central nodes both within the FSF-SD network and the political networks of the DCMS, PL, FA and FL. And Miles' network capital saw him appointed to the newly-created post of FSF Chief Executive in November 2012 and a member of the DCMS' new Expert Working Group on *Football Supporter Ownership and Engagement* two years later.

In chapter 5, I discussed the role Miles played as an important 'recruitment agent' (McAdam, 1986), in connecting submerged England supporters' networks with the FSF and FSE. And during this start of this *timescale*, Miles played a 'bridge leading' role (Robnett, 1997) in connecting new creative North East based networks to the FSF convention of 'patient coalition building' between supporters and key players within the football industry. In doing so, some of the core FSF network nodes and strategic interactions evolved which saw Daykin and Martin O'Hara become central players:

I've a lot of admiration for Kev Miles when I first got to know him; a clever bright individual who knows .... I mean Kev's slightly different in that he's not the biggest activist but he's clever with what he does and between us we've managed to do some really good things with the FSF over recent years ... it was his idea that I came on as deputy chair of the FSF (in 2012) because the FSF wasn't going in the right direction, it wasn't being as successful as it could have been and so we set out around 2011 to change that, to change the perception of what people thought, we weren't getting on very well with the authorities and seen as a bit of a noisy pressure group, we were doing a lot of things wrong .... I mean the Safe Standing campaign wasn't going in

the right direction, it was being dismissed far too easily by the people that we ... you know we kept talking to the government about it and the police and being knocked back every single time by saying there is no demand for it and one day we sat down and said well we know that there is so why don't we do something about it and that's when the step changed happened when we suddenly decided to go out and meet the people (the clubs and fans) and prove there was a real demand.

Martin O'Hara (personal interview, 29 January 2016)

And for Daykin, this became an important tactic in seeking to soften the attitudes towards standing amongst the football authorities before any localised mass participation movement would successfully mobilise (FSF *Annual Report*, 2012).

## MOVEMENT ENTREPRENEURS: SEEING AND FEELING THE MOVEMENT

Movements create meanings through the protest events that they stage because 'actions really do speak louder than words' (McAdam, 1996).

In chapter 5, I discussed how the FSF-*SUSD* relational networks produced a formal report which became a group convention for shaping what Safe Standing could look like as a 21<sup>st</sup> century solution to the problem of persistent standing in all-seated areas, and how aligning the movement with a convertible standing/seating model as *the* master frame ensured the 'terrace' word became less dominant as a Hillsborough focused 'rhetoric of reaction' (Hirschman, 1991). However, upon taking over the Safe Standing portfolio in 2011, Daykin recognised that some fans and journalists continued to reference the campaign as a 'return to standing' rather than the 'introduction of new technologies' (FSF *Safe Standing Campaign Annual Report*, 2011). Having joined the FSF as an individual member during the second *timescale*, Jon Darch, a Bristol City supporter and member of the Bristol City Supporters Trust was weakly tied to Kevin Miles and Ken Malley through the England Supporters network. Like myself, Darch had stood on the Kippax at Maine Road when studying a BA Hons degree in German Language and Literature at the University of

Manchester during the late 1970s and had developed an interest in German football and an affinity for the club FC Union Berlin (Darch, personal interview, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016). Throughout the course of 2003 to 2005, Darch upon attending a number of football games in Germany, became aware of rail seating as a convertible standing/seating model and subsequently followed events at the FSF through the mobilisation of the Safe Standing campaign:

As an individual member of the FSF, I was aware of the national campaign that people like Phill Gatenby had started with *Standing Areas for Eastlands* which morphed of course into Safe Standing, which in hindsight is not a good title ... if one was sitting down now as a marketing person to promote the name of a national campaign to permit standing again at top flight stadia you wouldn't call it the Safe Standing campaign because that implies some form of standing is unsafe .... So I was aware of that campaign and by that point, ... my background after my university days I went into commercial radio and selling advertising, and one of the key things I learned was the best way to get a message across is to "keep it simple / stupid" and as I saw more of the way the FSF campaign had been going I thought one of the problems was not adhering to that principle ... they are saying they want Safe Standing, but the politicians and the media are saying they want terraces.

Jon Darch (personal interview, 21 January 2016)

During the start of this *timescale*, Darch began working on a proposal to build a Rail Seat demonstration model which aimed to raise awareness of the new technology by visually showing clubs and supporter groups how it would work in practice. As an individual FSF member but someone initially operating outside of the Safe Standing network, Darch launched a personal *Safe Standing Roadshow* website in 2009 which began publicising the new FSF Safe Standing online petition and a 'lobby your politician' link in wake of the bill put forward by Don Foster. To achieve this, Darch contacted the German company *Eheim-Mobel-GmbH* who had previously installed 'hi-rail seats' at TSG Hoffenheim and VfB Stuttgart in the Bundesliga and was encouraged to contact Eheim's British partner *Ferco Seating Solutions*. As a global manufacturer of auditorium, cinema, education and sports spectator seating, Ferco had supplied seats at the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Malaysia, the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney and at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium in 2006.



Subsequently, Darch formed a tie with Michael Burnett, the managing director of *Ferco* which saw the company build the small Rail Seat Roadshow unit designed to conform with the SGSA *Green Guide* requirements and presented the proposal to FSF networks at the annual Fans Parliament in 2010 (Darch, personal interview, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016). These interactions between Darch and the core Safe Standing network became an important mechanism for building relational collective action and recruiting Darch to the newly formed FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* in April 2011.

Meanwhile, the FSF had been working closely with a group of Wolverhampton Wanderers supporters and the club's CEO, Jez Moxey, over the problem of persistent standing at their Molineux stadium and helped facilitate a meeting between supporters and other club executives including Marketing Director Matt Grayson and Stadium Manager Steve Sutton at Wolves' own Fans' Parliament on 19 May 2011. Darch and Clarke used this event to launch the *Safe Standing Roadshow* and provide a demonstration of the Rail Seat unit which was positively received by supporters and club officials (*FSF News*, June 2011). Subsequently, the FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* looked to build momentum by helping connect Darch and the Roadshow to other supporters' groups, clubs and events in June and July which included Oxford United's Annual Supporters Open Day, an open Safe Standing meeting at The Sandon pub in Liverpool, and a meeting with Celtic's stadium general manager Rob Buchanan who favoured rail seating as an option to deal with persistent standing at Celtic Park. And one month later on 9 July 2011, Darch presented the Roadshow unit to the breakout Safe Standing session at the FSF Fans Parliament and in doing so became a central node within what Daykin had characterised as the '*Magnificent Seven*' core network, which included himself, Darch, Clarke, Caton, Nash, Jacks, and a new National Council member and Scunthorpe supporter, Dave Beverley (*FSF Safe Standing Google Group Network*, September 2011). Daykin had centralised the core

network to seven players but ensured it remained tied to six others which included O'Hara, Powell, Brunskill, Rose, Wood and deputy FSF chair Jon Keen.

These interactions throughout the course of 2011 to 2012 formalised the Roadshow as a key repertoire of contention and began agitating a wider body of covert networks which included high profile football clubs in the Premier League and Championship. And as evidenced throughout the first two *timescales*, these interactions and relationships of cooperation and exchange are often underpinned by informal and interpersonal ties which help build trust and social capital amongst activists and other players (Edwards, 2014):

What was interesting was when we had that Safe Standing Roadshow we could start .... Jon took it round a few clubs and pretty quickly ... it turns out a mate of mine, a lad who was right-back at my university team when I was centre-half, he ended up as Chief Executive of Aston Villa, a lad called Paul Faulkner and I drop him a line saying, look you know ... I mean Villa had loads of problems with both home and away fans standing in seated areas and the safety guy lived in fear of somebody topping over the back of the Holte End and so I was exchanging a few chats on Facebook about this and I said, look can I come down and show you the Roadshow and he said yeah ... and he got all of his top management team, Jon rocked up with the Roadshow and we had a chat and he said 'look why aren't we having this debate, this is clearly new technology, this is great, this would solve loads of our problems, let's have another chat about it and that was a real watershed moment because the minute one club put their head about the parapet it broke down this cycle of passing the buck.

Peter Daykin (personal interview, 20 January 2016)

According to Gillan (2018), social movements are dynamic and contain fluid relational flows in multiple directions. As new participants in movements bring their frames, identifies, tactical preferences, networks and resources with them, new contexts flow into the movement and this enables a movement to impact its context because it is a part of its socio-political environment, not separate from it. These new frames, tactical preferences and networks were established and negotiated within the FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* as an online working utopia (Crossley, 1999) which from April 2011 to December 2012 contained 627 topic threads across multiple fields. These interactions strengthened the collective effervescence between Daykin, Darch, Clarke, Jacks, Caton, Brunskill,

O'Hara, Powell, Nash and Wood. And these discussion threads as interactive symbolic spaces made up of conventions and resources, became a foci for sharing ideas and strengthening ties (Cleland et al. 2018) between the network and other players within wider supporter group networks and the football industry. This enabled Darch to compile a *Club Contact Progress Spreadsheet* detailing the various networks established across the Premier League, Championship and Leagues One and Two and those who were on record of supporting rail seating.

The promotion of the *Safe Standing Roadshow* to eighteen football clubs across the UK throughout 2011 and 2012, was characteristic of what Jasper (1997) refers to as the 'creativity' and 'imagination' which some activists use to challenge political structures and opportunities which both expand and contract (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004). Alongside the FSF's patient coalition building tactic of improving dialogue with the DCMS, SGSA, PL, FL, ACPO and FSOA, the direct action of the Roadshow 'spoke louder than words' (McAdam, 1996) and became an important tactic in visualizing what a Safe Standing trial would look. In doing so, the Roadshow was presented during a Parliamentary debate on Tuesday 11 December 2012, chaired by Liberal Democrat MP Roger Godsiff, having tabled a new EDM in favour of a trial (FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network*, December 2012). The relational logic of collective action was characteristic of what Edwards (2014) conceptualised as 'action made in a context of interdependence' and what Diani (1992) defined as a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals. This is important because it recognises that whilst the FSF became a professionalized SMO, the multi-organisational nature of Safe Standing comprised of players who were both strongly and weakly tied to the FSF organisational structure and how the pattern of alliances formed, facilitated both fairly institutionalized activities such as lobbying the DCMS, SGSA, PL, FL, ACPO and FSOA alongside more radical direct action associated with Darch's roadshow. And having Darch as an individual FSF member but operating outside of the

FSF as a SMO became a mutually influencing repertoire of contention which blurred the boundary between organised collective protest and unorganised individual protest:

Jon must have been to every bloody club in the country over the last five years taking the Roadshow up and down and that has been hugely beneficial in showing a model which is palatably different to the terraces of the 1980s and so he's been working on that kind of thing on a very boots on the ground level whilst at the FSF, we've been concentrating much more on building relationships with all of the different stakeholders.

Peter Daykin (personal interview, 20 January 2016)

Jon Darch is an individual FSF member but the Roadshow is like an independent thing which he does you know, it's not funded by the FSF, but has been influential in impressing security officers and safety officers, people you want to win over, like Chief Executives of football clubs.

Michael Brunskill (personal interview, 27 January 2016)

We (the FSF) can distance ourselves sometimes from those who sit outside of the FSF when negotiating with the SGSA or government etc. We can get others (networked) to say and do things ... like we've done that with Jon Darch, we often say we can get Jon to do things that we can't possibly do, we can get him to say things that we can't and it's good to have that but we want them working with us.

Martin O'Hara (personal interview 29 January 2016).

Jon has been absolutely inexhaustible, I mean the amount of time and effort that he pours in is a course for admiration and the Roadshow has helped make the breakthrough. We've worked closely with Jon but we deliberately keep a little bit of a public distance because whilst we're hand in glove, in reality it actually helps sometimes if Jon retains a degree of independence and we have a degree of independence from Jon because there are certain things which can be said by an individual campaigner which can't be said by an organisation but there is nothing we do where we don't work in close cooperation.

Steven Powell (personal interview, 29 January 2016)

Having reprogrammed rail seating as a counter-repertoire of contention and Safe Standing master frame during the second *timescale*, the FSF-SUSD relational network, whilst still committed to better management of existing standing in all-seated areas and the protection of terraces in Leagues One and Two, had identified a key opportunity to pursue and achieve a preference for social change in football (Clark and Wilson, 1961). However, as Zald and Ash (1966) argued, such preferences are often difficult to fulfil and thus movements often

rely upon secondary incentives, or what McCarthy and Zald (1977) conceptualized as movement entrepreneurs. And so, whilst the ‘introduction of new technology’ was adopted as an important framing mechanism, it was Darch’s creativity in spotting a ‘gap in the market’ which enabled the partnership with *Ferco* and the Roadshow demonstration unit to begin recasting grievances such as the ‘unsafe persistent standing of supporters in all-seated areas’ as ‘preferences for new technology’ and a ‘demand for choice’ within the wider football supporter population (Edwards, 2014). In doing so, the Roadshow became a ‘technical innovation’ (McAdam, 1983) to leverage power against established powerbrokers such as the SGSA and PL through the art of surprise (Cleland et al. 2018).

#### SWITCHING CELTIC: MISBEHAVIOUR AND THE GREEN BRIGADE

Having established the Roadshow as repertoire of contention in 2011, the Safe Standing network sought to further localise the movement by working with club specific supporter networks and thus continued to reproduce the FSF’s networked practices across multiple nodal materialities (Castells, 2015). This became an important mechanism for switching together disparate groups of supporters across the PL and FL during a period characterised by the mobilization of internet-mediated protest movements such as ‘*Stand Against Modern Football*’ (Hill et al. 2018). This was important because whilst the core Safe Standing conventions were established and negotiated within the FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network*, the protest actions themselves became interconnected across both online and urban locations, uniting different networks against what Hill et al. (2018) conceptualized as the corporate logics of modern football. The FSF played a role in helping mobilise resources for various club specific supporter networks whilst central nodes such as Miles were ‘able to exploit their social capital to establish negotiations with the PL’ (Hill et al. 2018: 704). In doing so, Miles, as a soft leader and type of ‘institutional activist’ (Santoro

and McGuire, 1997) developed fostered working relationships with various bodies which these interconnected supporter networks were collectively acting against (Cleland et al. 2018):

Kev Miles always had a bit more of an insider understanding (of the issues around Safe Standing) because he'd been paid to do a job for the FSF and he'd been involved with the safety angles ... he was involved with the foreign office because of the England fans' assemblies so he was closer I think to the security apparatus of football and I think he knew from the discussions he'd been having that there wasn't actually an objection within lots of clubs to Safe Standing but they couldn't be seen to say so in public. And so Kev was the one who said let's start working on the clubs because that's the weak point because if you get quite a few clubs saying we want to do this then the Premier League have to be careful because these are his employers and then the issue ceases to be about is it safe or not and instead becomes about why can't the clubs do it if they want to do it within a league set up with the express permission of enabling clubs to achieve their goals.

Dave Boyle (personal interview, 24 March 2016)

Throughout the course of July 2011 to December 2012, the FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* contained over 380 threads, many of which captured the various strategic interactions with club specific networks and the move to evidence demand at a local level:

We encouraged supporters of each individual club to test the water themselves at local level ... 'go and find out, ask your members, how many people want it' and every time we did a survey, club by club, each one would come back with a 90 per cent vote for yes we want it. We also knew we had some supporters out there in individual clubs and we also had to find out whether that existed throughout football or isolated cases and so we set out one by one, using the Roadshow and things like that and talking to different supporters groups to find out whether they wanted it and that took quite a while.

Martin O'Hara (personal interview, 29 January 2016)

In localising the strategic interactions with club specific supporters' groups, the core Safe Standing network became increasingly aware of wider cases of conflict between some fans of Newcastle, Cardiff and Sunderland and their respective clubs and local police over persistent standing in all-seated areas (FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network*, 2011). Meanwhile, in Scotland, Celtic Football Club issued a formal statement in response to various media reports regarding spectator behaviour in sections 110, 111 and 112 of the

stadium occupied by the self-identified ‘Ultra’ group; the *Green Brigade*, which included overcrowding, persistent standing and the lateral movement of spectators (Celtic, 28 April, 2011). Consequently, representatives of the Celtic Supporters Trust met the club’s Chief Executive Peter Lawwell on 7 July, 2011 to discuss the feasibility of introducing Safe Standing areas which became a formal proposal at the Trusts AGM later that year (*Celtic Trust*, 2011). These interactions produced collective action which was made in a context of interdependence by local networks weakly tied to the FSF and in doing so produced new political opportunities for mobilisation. And one of these email interactions between the chair of the Celtic Trust, Jeanette Findlay and Stuart Wood of the FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* in April 2011 helped connect core FSF nodes, including Darch and the Roadshow to Celtic and other players in Scottish football. In doing so, throughout the course of May 2011 to February 2013, Darch and the Roadshow visited Celtic, Rangers, Hearts, Hibernian and Aberdeen in Scotland, and met both the Chief Executive of the Scottish Professional Football League, Neil Doncaster and Celtic’s Chief Executive Peter Lawwell to discuss rail seating after the Scottish Premier League formally approved the proposal to allow clubs to pilot standing areas subject to further approval from the police and local authorities in December 2011 (SPFL, 19 December, 2011; *Safe Standing Roadshow*, May 2012). According to O’Hara, Scotland offered an open political opportunity post-devolution to campaign because the all-seating legislation, whilst enforced in the top two Scottish divisions, only actually applied to England and Wales:

We realised because of the political landscape in Scotland and the rise of nationalism that it was a bit of an open door for us because there was no way that the UK government would force the Scottish government to enforce the legislation (although they did try) and so we knew this offered a strategic opportunity and once we’d persuaded Celtic as a club ... bear in mind Jon had acted as a go-between the manufacturers of rail seating and the club, you know he’d put a lot of work into that ... getting people to visit Celtic we thought this would go through.

Martin O’Hara (personal interview, 29 January 2016)

By identifying this new political opportunity, the FSF were able to reprogram the logics of rail seating beyond an internal group convention and thus connect *the* Safe Standing master frame to wider supporter networks and contexts. Acting as a switcher, Darch was able to connect the visual Roadshow as a resource to agitate local supporter groups, like Celtic and Cardiff to campaign at a local level. And by 2013, these strategic interactions helped produce a broader shift in public opinion in favour of Safe Standing evidenced by the FSF's annual fans survey, which included the support of 85 per cent of female fans, during a period where some senior officers from the West Midlands Police and ACPO had publicly supported extending the debate on standing safety and security (*FSF News*, December 2012). In doing so, central nodes within the Safe Standing network visited the UK Parliament to showcase the Roadshow to MPs, football industry figures, police and journalists of *The Case for Safe Standing in Football* having successfully received public support from twenty two clubs across the PL and FL (*FSF Annual Report*, 2013). For Miles as newly appointed FSF Chief Executive, this was characteristic of a positive change in tone during a period which focused on enlisting the support of clubs for new trials, thus enabling the FSF to demonstrate the 'long denied demand from within the game' (Miles, *FSF Annual Report*, 2013).

Consequently, the period from 2012-2014 witnessed two significant mobilisations. Firstly, a total of 23 clubs had gone public in support of Safe Standing and more than two-thirds of the Football League's 72 clubs had voted in favour of a motion by the Football League to explore Safe Standing trials. And secondly, by summer of 2014, these interactions gave the Football League's Chief Executive Shaun Harvey a mandate to lobby Sports Minister Helen Grant to 'request that the 'all-seated' stadia requirement for Championship clubs be reviewed with a view to the re-introduction of standing accommodation' and approach the SGSA to 'request that rail seating products be licensed in Football League grounds' (*FSF* 2014; *Safe Standing Roadshow*, 2014). This emerged as



a result of a tie between Bob Symns the Chief Executive of Peterborough United and Jon Darch upon a Roadshow visit to Hanover in Germany during the summer of 2012 (*Safe Standing Roadshow*, 2014).

It was, however, Darch's connection to his own club, Bristol City, which produced one of the most important mobilisations in 2014, and further characterised the way in which Safe Standing had strategically sought to build relationships with key people inside football clubs and the wider industry. On 12 February 2014, Bristol City became the first club in the UK to install a block of 33 Ferco rail seats as part of the redevelopment of its Ashton Gate stadium, a ground which is used for both football and rugby union. Whilst the seats would not be permissible for football matches unless there was a change in the all-seating legislation, they could be used for rugby fixtures as a legitimate method of standing. Darch advised CEO Doug Harman on the project and this was important tactically for two reasons. Firstly, the Bristol launch produced significant media interest which saw Darch and others from the Safe Standing network undertake a series of radio and TV station requests to discuss newly installed Rail Seats. This ensured rail seating as *the* Safe Standing master frame would connect to a wider audience across the BBC and ITV, evidencing that some clubs were willing to incorporate it into redevelopment plans, and in doing so, prepare in advance for a change in the law (*Safe Standing Roadshow*, 2014; FSF-Safe Standing Google group network, 2014).

Secondly, Ashton Gate created a context by which Darch and the Safe Standing network could tactically question whether rail seating (when unlocked) could be considered as a legitimate form of seated accommodation. This was significant because it began the process of reframing what rail seating itself might be and this mobilised the company *Bristol Sport* to produce a document in April, 2014 which argued that rail seating complied in all respects with the recommendations set out in the SGSA's Green Guide (*Bristol Sport Report*, April, 2014). Consequently, new connections and interactions saw this report

disseminated to other high profile clubs such as Manchester United and Trafford Council to discuss rail seating as an all-seating compliant option. One of these connections between Darch and Duncan Drasdo, CEO of MUST saw Drasdo become a member of the FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* in 2014. Drasdo, a web programmer who held degrees in Chemistry and Analytical Science had played an active role during Manchester United supporters' protests against the proposed BSkyB takeover in 1998 and the Glazer family's ownership of the club in 2005. Drasdo, became chairman of *Shareholders Unite Against Murdoch* (SUAM) and a key supporter of the Green and Gold protest in 2010 (Drasdo, personal interview, 25 February 2016). And having been a committee member of IMUSA, he was weakly tied to Andy Walsh and Mark Longden (King, 2003).

Meanwhile in 2013, Steven Powell as the FSF's Cymru/Wales coordinator, identified the National Assembly for Wales as a new political opportunity to mobilise support for Safe Standing amongst Welsh Premier League clubs. Powell worked with AFC Wrexham, then of the National League (the first tier of English football outside of the Football League) to look at ways of applying for a legislative competence order from Westminster to take sports ground safety in Wales under the wing of the Welsh National Assembly. In June 2014, the FSF paid a visit to the assembly to speak at an event organised by Leader of the Opposition, Andrew RT Davies and in doing so, realised there was cross party support from assembly members to consider a Safe Standing trial in Wales (*Safe Standing Roadshow*, 2014; *FSF Safe Standing Google Group Network*, 2014). This mobilisation led the Welsh Conservatives to publish a report into Safe Standing in February 2015 which found that from 2,364 fans surveyed, 96 per cent supported a Safe Standing pilot to trial modern stadium technology and that 84 per cent believed Safe Standing areas would decrease the likelihood of conflict between stewards and supporters. Backed by the FSF, the Safe Standing Roadshow, Swansea City, Cardiff City, Newport County and Wrexham Football Clubs, the report followed a Welsh Conservative motion passed in the

National Assembly which became the first UK legislature to formally adopt a ‘pro-standing’ position (*Welsh Conservatives*, 16 February 2015).

Whilst this period was characterised by important mobilisations in England and Wales, on the 13 August 2014, Celtic received formal notification from the Glasgow City Council Safety Advisory Group that their plan to introduce rail seating had been rejected (*Supporters Direct Scotland*, 2014). O’Hara recalled the sense of frustration and cynicism within the network:

By the time they submitted their planning application we thought this was going to go through but it didn’t ... It was getting knocked back by the local safety advisory group and we were obtaining copies of all this documentation but suspected they weren’t being truthful .. They were finding reasons to reject it, but we wanted to find out what the real reason was behind it and we suspected an influence from the UK government, so we went through the process of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and we were rejected several times because the law is slightly different in Scotland with regards to FOI, so I think it was Malcolm at the time who had knowledge of the law and I think he rewrote the FOI wording so they couldn’t reject it. This battle went on for about a year until eventually we had to go to court to learn that any decision the local planning department made was considered to have ‘national’ significance. And so any decision made in Scotland would have implications for football across the rest of the UK.

Martin O’Hara (personal interview, 29 January 2016).

Despite this initial set back, however, Darch continued to interact with Celtic’s stadium manager Rob Buchanan throughout the course of 2014, and this weak tie ensured the Safe Standing network were appropriately connected to Celtic, the *Celtic Trust* and the club’s Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO) John Paul Taylor. These connections were important because they established Darch as a central node between events in Scotland and the working tactics of the Safe Standing network coordinated by Daykin and the FSF. And in June 2015, the network learned that four years after Darch had taken the Roadshow to Celtic, the Glasgow Safety Advisory group had finally given the club permission to install 2,600 Rail Seats at Celtic Park from the 2016/2017 season (*Celtic*, 2015, *FSF Safe Standing Google Group Network*, 2015). Giugni (1998) argued that movements are often

heterogeneous in their goals and thus many outcomes of movement activity are likely unintended. In 2015, the Celtic mobilisation represented a critical milestone for the Safe Standing movement but attention must be paid to the way in which this is tied to a sequential view of movements with a temporal sensitivity. The misbehaviour of persistent standing by some members of the *Green Brigade* at Celtic in 2011 was consistent with a culture of persistent standing and problems of crowd control at football matches in England and Wales across the first two *timescales*. However, new networks and connections bring new creativity, skills and resources to the tactical repertoires of movements and in doing so create new political opportunities. And whilst the context at Celtic did not produce a successful change to the all-seating legislation in England and Wales in 2015, it did demonstrate the impact of programming the *Safe Standing Roadshow* as a Safe Standing logic, through the collaborative actions of networks which are switched together (Castells, 2013).

#### ‘BENEATH THE WAVE’: SPIRIT OF SHANKLY AND THE HILLSBOROUGH INQUESTS

Throughout the first two *timescales*, the *SAFE*, *SUSD* and Safe Standing relational networks recognised that whilst the state’s all-seating legislation represented the most tangible obstacle to overcome, the legacy of the Hillsborough disaster had created a powerfully emotive discourse which ensured discussions of Safe Standing were embedded within the ‘necessary’ reform and regulation of supporters. Amanda Jacks recognised this noting, ‘one of the primary reasons we were always given when we started the debate was “we can’t have another Hillsborough”, and we were also told it would deter women and children from attending matches’ (cited in Hunter, 2017). Likewise, Dave Boyle recalled how various forms of activism from the FSA or FSF about Safe Standing were opposed by

some members of the *Hillsborough Family Support Group* (HFSG) (personal interview, 24 March, 2016) and that for a period of time after 2001, this created a ‘conflictual discourse which became metronomic’.

The HFSG was founded in May 1989 by a majority of the families who lost loved ones at Hillsborough (HFSG, 2019). Nine years later in 1998, another group emerged under the name of the *Hillsborough Justice Campaign* (HJC) after some families decided to join up with *Survivors and Supporters of Justice for All*. Whilst there have been some disagreements between HFSG and the HJC, they have both played an instrumental role in creating a social movement for justice over the past thirty years against insurmountable odds (HFSG, 2019; HJC, 2019). However, according to Malcolm Clarke, the two groups have taken a different position publicly on Safe Standing during the course of this *timescale*:

The HJC have never been opposed to standing areas, the HFSG have ... They take rather difference stances. My own view of that is .... I think for some families, all-seated stadia are the legacy of the death of their loved ones in a sense, because they can say at least we got better stadia out of it.

Malcolm Clarke (personal interview, 3 February 2016)

Recognising the sensitive nature of Safe Standing amongst some of the families and Liverpool fans, the Liverpool Supporters Union; *Spirit of Shankly* (SOS) refrained from adopting a formal position on ‘Rail Seating’ or ‘Safe Standing’ (SOS, 2016). SOS became the third Liverpool supporter movement to emerge in 2008 after 300 fans met at the Sandon Pub in Liverpool opposed to the club ownership of Tom Hicks and George Gillett. This group evolved from the *Keep Flags Scouse* (KFS) and *Reclaim the Kop* (RTK) cultural movements and retained roots in the club’s 1892 block on the Kop end of their Anfield stadium (Millward, 2011; 2012). Hill et al. (2018) captured the role played by members of the SOS network during *StandAMF* protests in 2013 alongside members of MUST, Everton’s *Blue Union*, *Arsenal Supporters Trust* and *Tottenham Hotspur Supporters Trust*.

These protests according to Hill et al. (2018) became part of a ‘reprogramming of modern football’ which connected previously unconnected groups like the FSF and independent supporter networks. Consequently, former SOS chair, Jay McKenna who also works as the policy and campaigns support officer for the Trade Union Congress (TUC), played an important switching role in seeking to unite fans in a collaborative manner and this led to some people like McKenna and Dave Kelly from *Blue Union*, to take active roles within FSF North West branch meetings. In doing so, groups like SOS and *Blue Union* formed relational collective action with the FSF on ticket price protests like *Twenty’s Plenty* alongside club specific mobilisations such as #WalkOutOn77 (Hill et al, 2018; Cleland et al. 2018). These interactions are characteristic of the ways in which networks and sub-networks contain well-connected actors within them. Whilst SOS may be more informally structured and non-hierarchical than the FSF, they remain linked by brokers who help forge new connections (Cleland et al. 2018).

During this *timescale*, Amanda Jacks as FSF caseworker on policing and stewarding worked closely with members of SOS on public order policing and was part of a small network with Jon Darch which organised a meeting at the Sandon pub on 23 June, 2011 to showcase the *Safe Standing Roadshow* (Safe Standing Roadshow, 2011). McKenna’s tie to the FSF and Jacks is historicised by the role the FSF played in lending professional support to McKenna and two other supporters in 2009 after they were arrested under Section 5 Public Order Offences during a ‘Yanks Out’ protest (Millward, 2011). Four years later on 6 July 2013, Jacks and McKenna were part of a collective *StandAMF* panel at a meeting in Liverpool designed to discuss rising ticket prices in the Premier League, whilst Darch wrote a guest article on Safe Standing for an independent Liverpool supporters’ website; *This Is Anfield*, and the podcast *The Anfield Wrap (TAW)*.

Following an application on 19 December 2012 by the Attorney General Dominic Grieve, the High Court quashed the verdicts of the original Hillsborough inquests and

ordered fresh ones to be held (Gibson, 2012). In doing so, new inquest hearings commenced on Monday 31 March, 2014 in Warrington, Cheshire. Whilst the Safe Standing network had been actively engaged in strategic interactions at Celtic, Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur and the DCMS with the new sports minister Tracey Crouch throughout the course of 2014 to 2015, there was a strategic attempt to submerge some movement activity to allow space for the inquests to progress and conclude. This is characteristic of what Gillan (2018) referred to as movement activity operating ‘beneath the wave’ or what Melucci (1989) conceptualised as a period of ‘latency’. From January to March 2016, the FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* contained only 23 threads and some of the core network believed that the pending verdicts in April 2016 might create a new socio-political environment in which new interpretive Safe Standing frames could be developed:

I think everybody sees the inquests as a brilliant thing, that the Hillsborough families after all this time have finally got their day in court and are finally getting what looks like rigorous analysis of what happened and it looks like they are going to finally get justice which is inspirational for those working on football campaigns. They kept going for such a long time. But the inquests also remove a big impediment because if you look at what Tracey Crouch said in response to a written question .... She said I’m not convinced about the argument at the minute but after the inquests it might be something we look at again.

Peter Daykin (personal interview, 20 January 2016)

Now I think depending on what the inquest jury comes up with, that the need to have that kind of legacy is slightly less because they will have a different legacy with the verdict and some actions possibly being taken and I think the passionate opposition to standing will ... Well I think it already has diminished a lot.

Malcolm Clarke (personal interview, 3 February 2016)

I think some politicians and football administrators who have perhaps felt it would have been insensitive to talk openly about ideas of standing whilst the inquests have been ongoing, may feel that when they have been concluded they may speak openly about what they think of Safe Standing proposals.

Jon Darch (personal interview, 21 January 2016)

On 26 April, the jury returned a verdict which found that the 96 fans who died at Hillsborough were unlawfully killed and that a catalogue of failings by police and the

ambulance services contributed to their deaths (Conn, 2016). Moreover, the jury concluded that the behaviour of supporters played no part in contributing to the dangerous situation at the Leppings Lane turnstiles. On 28 June 2017, it was announced that six people were to be charged with offences relating to Hillsborough which included former Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield and former Chief Inspector Sir Norman Bettison. These charges ranged from manslaughter by gross negligence to misconduct in public office (IPCC, 2017).

Towards the end of 2016, two critical mobilisations on Safe Standing subsequently emerged. Firstly, some Liverpool supporters networked to SOS, TAW and the FSF, wrote pieces on Safe Standing and in doing so characterised an emerging discourse on Merseyside which reflected a changing socio-political environment. Dr David Webber, an academic and member of SOS, argued that the landmark verdicts delivered at the inquests evidenced the need to challenge the deep-seated and duplicitous attitude towards supporters, particularly regarding standing, terracing and the consumption of alcohol. And this meant that whilst Safe Standing remained a controversial issue, the ability to make watching football safer with new technology would enable the footballing authorities to deliver a fitting legacy to those who lost their lives at Hillsborough (Webber, 2016). In August 2016, SOS tweeted a photograph of their management committee agenda which included ‘adopting a position on standing’.

Secondly, on 17 November 2016, it was announced that the PL had begun formal discussions on Safe Standing with all 20 PL clubs at a meeting in London. Following this, the Premier League chief executive Richard Scudamore noted that whilst there was no imminent prospect of the government changing the all-seating legislation, the PL recognised that some individual clubs were interested (*Premier League*, 2016). And PL director of communications Dan Johnson recognised that there had been a ‘softening’ on the topic of standing citing the rail seating at Celtic as an example of good practice (*BBC*



*News*, 2016). This changing climate produced new strategic interactions between the PL, the FSF and fan representatives from various PL clubs at a meeting in April 2017 at which the PL confirmed its intention to ‘undertake a detailed project designed to broaden understanding of the current position in relation to standing, including potential options on Rail Seating’ (FSF, 2017). On 18 July 2017, Jay McKenna wrote an article for *TAW* titled ‘It’s time we talked about rail seating’ which recognised that recent events had changed the socio-political landscape in which Safe Standing was embedded in Liverpool. McKenna argued that the priority of SOS had always been truth and justice, but now that the truth was known and the path towards justice had been set out, SOS had reached a point where they were ready to have an open discussion on whether members favoured or were opposed to Rail Seating (*TAW*, 2017). Four days later, SOS held a public Safe Standing meeting in Liverpool at the Liner Hotel and invited Amanda Jacks from the FSF, Rick Riding from the SGSA and Celtic’s supporter liaison officer John Paul Taylor. Taylor himself had met Gareth Roberts, editor of *TAW* and member of SOS on the 8 April outside Celtic Park before Celtic’s game against Kilmarnock. Roberts had obtained a ticket in the north stand lower rail seating section and was writing a piece for *TAW* on Safe Standing at Celtic (*TAW*, 2017). After the meeting in Liverpool, SOS conducted a week-long poll which revealed that out of 18,000 Liverpool supporters sampled, 88.21 per cent were in favour of rail seating being introduced in stadiums in English football (Hunter, 2016). And in April 2018, McKenna and SOS organised a trip for a group of Liverpool supporters to visit Celtic Park to experience rail seating during Celtic’s game against Ross County. These mobilisations further evidenced emerging connections between networks and sub-networks which were characterised by events at Celtic, the *Safe Standing Roadshow*, the Hillsborough Inquests and the weak ties between members of SOS and the FSF, including McKenna and Jacks, throughout the course of 2011-2018.

## RHIZOMATIC NETWORKS AND THE CORPORATE LOGICS OF FAN ENGAGEMENT

The research of Hill et al. (2018) into the *StandAMF* protests analysed how social media enables supporters to communicate in ways which transcend longstanding supporter rivalries and engender shared affective frames, which themselves unite diverse groups against the corporate logics of modern football. They argue that emerging networked supporter coalitions lack firm identities or singular ideological claims and this lack of hierarchical leadership or constitutionalised goals sets *StandAMF* apart as a new species of social movement from a more traditional SMO like the FSF. Whilst social media itself is not *the* movement, it does facilitate the synchronisations of previously unconnected groups into decentralised networks of autonomous nodes (Castells, 2015). According to Chesters and Welsh (2006), this type of sprawling network structure is rhizomatic because it involves a mass of nodes and connections which shoot in different complex directions. Rhizome is a term drawn from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to capture the way in which principles of connection are heterogeneous, multiple and decentralised. However, whilst this was characteristic of *StandAMF*, Hill et al. (2018) found that at specific points over a three-year period, the movement dwelled into horizontal spaces of social media and became switched with the networked practices of organisations like the FSF. Switching is thus key to understanding how social movement networks involve both SMO's and more informal networks which protest in ways which complicate the collective and individual dimensions of movement activism (Edwards, 2014).

During this *timescale*, the tactic of localising Safe Standing through strategic interactions between the core FSF network and club specific supporters' groups produced rhizomatic networks and mobilisations. Having played a critical role in allowing supporters and clubs to 'see and feel' the movement through the *Safe Standing Roadshow*, Darch had also developed transnational links and became weakly tied to both supporter and club

official networks in Sydney, Eindhoven and Orlando. In March 2016, PSV Eindhoven announced they were to become the first Dutch club to create a Safe Standing area in an all-seated stadium in Holland. Shortly after, other European clubs such as Ajax, CSKA Moscow and SK Sturm Graz announced their intention to introduce Safe Standing areas. Later that year, Western Sydney Wanderers and MLS side Orlando City announced plans to install Safe Standing sections in their new stadia, and New York City FC had begun the process of consulting supporters on the proposal to incorporate Safe Standing in development plans for the club's new stadium (FSF *Annual Review*, 2016).

Chapter 5 documented the central role which Kevin Miles played in bringing together transnational fan networks at the *European Football Fans Congress* and the subsequent emergence of FSE. The Safe Standing European networks and interactions during this *timescale* are further contextualised by the role of FSE and Miles as an elected committee member. In July 2017, FSE put forward alternative approaches to the increasing use of pyrotechnics to UEFA which included Safe Standing. Both Daykin and Miles subsequently attended the ninth European Football Fans Congress in Belgium that month and helped coordinate a specific Safe Standing plenary workshop. And two years later in March 2019, FSE helped coordinate the *Europe wants to Stand* protest at the Champions League game between Borussia Dortmund and Tottenham Hotspur.

In the UK, Brunskill released a Safe Standing brief within the FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* recognising the importance of continuing to drive the movement at a local level, in particular with hard to reach supporters including disabled, LGBT and/or BAME groups. To achieve this, the network looked to mobilise additional club specific surveys, events and contacts ranging from CEOs, Supporter Liaison and Safety Officers. Consequently, new players joined the core Safe Standing network throughout the course of 2016-2018, including Simon Magner from Everton's *Blue Union*, David Little of the *Swansea Supporters Trust*, and Tim Payton from the *Arsenal Supporters Trust*. The

recruitment of these club specific network nodes followed other recent positions held by Gemma Teale and Rhys Williams from the *Brentford Independent Association of Supporters*, Tom Greatrex from the *Fulham Supporters Trust*, Katrina Law from the *Tottenham Supporters Trust*, and Liam Thompson, a Newcastle supporter and FSF communications officer. And by 2018, the FSF had strengthened its staffing portfolio to 9 positions which included the recent appointment of Andy Walsh as National Game Development Officer.

Some of these localised networks and connections were critical in producing new rhizomatic networks and mobilisations towards the end of this *timescale*, characterised by a new style of football writing and culture of fan engagement initiatives. These included official supporters' trusts like Arsenal, Tottenham, Chelsea and Northampton, but also other supporters' groups such as *1894* at Manchester City, the *Black Scarf Movement* at Arsenal, *1881* at Watford, the *Holmesdale Fanatics* at Crystal Palace and *the Barclay End Projekt* at Norwich, all of which had coalesced around Safe Standing as a national supporter issue coordinated by the FSF, but which was becoming increasingly embedded within localised supporter group protests. In doing so, these networks produced leaderless relational collective action across both online and urban spaces, which included a large 'Legalise Safe Standing' banner initiated by the *1894* Manchester City network. A central player within this network was City supporter, Alberto Mombelli, who sought to mobilise other supporter groups at Oldham, Bury, West Ham, Watford, Norwich and Huddersfield to display the banner both inside and outside their stadia, with the help of funding from the FSF, the *STANDfanzine* and the *Football Action Network (FAN)*. And on 3 March 2015, the *1881* Watford network borrowed the banner from the *1894* group and displayed it at the foot of the Rookery Stand shortly before kick off during Watford's game against Fulham. The banner thus became a relational repertoire of contention because it was not directly coordinated or led by the FSF network, who themselves learned of it via images shared by

the *1894* network on Twitter (observation notes from *FSF* Safe Standing Google Group Network). Moreover, it was characterised by independent supporter groups doing collective action on their own as a type of ‘do it yourself politics’ whilst seeing it as contributing towards the construction of a wider Safe Standing relational collective identity (Edwards, 2014).

Having localised Safe Standing amongst independent supporter networks, the *FSF* saw new players emerge throughout the course of 2016-2019 which further decentralised the Safe Standing network structure. In doing so, Safe Standing became part of what Lawrence and Crawford (2018) conceptualised as the hyper-digitalization of football culture through an increasing importance placed upon digital technologies and the effects of digitization on the (un)structuring, (re)organising and (re)negotiating of late modern digital societies. Central to this are accelerated levels of digital literacy amongst football fans and the greater emphasis on informational, as opposed to consumerist forms of neoliberalism. These effects of digitization characterise a new culture of football writing which operates at the intersection of blogging, photography, magazines, and fashion and characterised by the corporate logic of late capitalism. Consequently, new nodes are producing, writing and photographing across multiple digital platforms such as *STANDfanzine*, *The Set Pieces*, *Mundial Magazine*, *Football London* and *Terrace Pics* and are important in switching other digital subnetworks including the *Football Action Network* (F.A.N) and *COPA90*. According to their Twitter profile, *COPA90* have a following of over 180k which includes the *FSF*, *FSE*, *SD*, *TAW*, *WSC* and various fanzines, leading football journalists and the leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn. More significantly, *COPA90s* digital media success story is characterised by its YouTube channel which has over 1.7 million subscribers (Burrell, 2016). The current Chief Business Officer of *COPA90* is James Kirkham who is also the co-founder of Holler, a leading digital agency and part of the *Leo Burnett* group based in London and Chicago which works with some of

the worlds most valued brands including Nintendo, Samsung, Kraft and Kellogg's (Kirkham, LinkedIn profile). *COPA90* is a network of filmmakers, artists and storytellers who as football fans seek to capture expressions of football culture across six continents and has formed partnerships with Nike, UEFA, Adidas, Budweiser, Nissan, Hyundai and ITV. In 2015, a *COPA90* subnetwork emerged under the name of the *Copa Collective* led by a small group seeking to connect bloggers, fans' rights groups, magazines and fanzines to build relational collective action across digital platforms. One year later on 23 March 2016, the *Copa Collective* published a Safe Standing piece written by Jon Darch on its digital website which produced new strategic interactions on Safe Standing, including a *Copa Collective Safe Standing Action Meeting* held at the Gunmakers Pub in Farringdon organised by Martino Simcik Arese, the fan culture editor at *COPA90* and former editor and chief of *TIFO* magazine. Invitees to the meeting included small networks from the FSF, FSE, SD, WSC, *Mundial Mag*, *The Football Pink*, *Late Tackle Magazine*, *Pickles Magazine*, *StandAMF*, *Fan Vox*, and *Eleven Magazine*. According to O'Hara and Powell these interactions reflected the way in which social media had mobilised Safe Standing in new directions, but with that came caution:

Social media is a big thing now, there's some guys at the *Copa Collective* who have decided they want to bring Safe Standing into English football so they invited us to a meeting which was very kind of them (sarcastically) ... I think Peter and Michael were going to it ... they are a video and YouTube network and have done things on Standing and Ticket Pricing, well they've decided ... well I kicked up a bit of a fuss about it to be fair ... they sent out an email to Safe Standing 'activists' so I said if they are sending it out to Safe Standing activists why haven't I got a copy and so I wanted to know who was on the list ... Jon had told us they had over a million subscribers ... they said they could clearly see Safe Standing was on the cusp of happening and wanted to share in the success ... they might be 'edgy' but they don't want to edge the wrong people out so I shared my reservations (with the group) I still think the reasons we made to keep things below the radar for the last eighteen months was the right thing to do however Peter took the view that on the basis they were going to have the meeting with or without us, he'd far rather that we had the chance to influence.

O'Hara (personal interview, 29 January 2016)

There is a crowd who we're talking to at the moment, *COPA90* who have funding from Google and they are very pro Safe Standing but they are younger people who didn't grow up with a traditional idea of having formally constituted organisations with written constitutions and elections and so it's far more of a group which comes together organically which is great and you need a broad coalition but the problem with that decision making structure is (a) you can sometimes weep with frustration because nobody has the authority to take quick decisions and react quickly to changes and events and (b) making sure decisions are implemented.

Powell (personal interview, 29 January 2016)

One important additional invitee at the meeting was *Tifosy*; a global sports investment firm who provide premium sports advisory and capital raising services across the sports industry (*Tifosy*, 2019). Based in London, *Tifosy* operates as a network of experts from fields of finance, law, sport, technology and marketing and is led by its founder and chief executive, Fausto Zanetton who has worked at both Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs, and co-founder Gianluca Vialli, a former professional footballer for Sampdoria, Juventus and Chelsea (*Tifosy*, 2019). According to Vialli, *Tifosy* remains the only sports crowdfunding platform to raise equity and debt for professional clubs and in connecting these two major fast-growing industries (crowdfunding and professional sport), it helps unlock digital capital for professional sports clubs. According to Cumming and Hornuf (2018), crowdfunding acts as a new and important source of financing for entrepreneurs which fills a funding gap that was traditionally difficult to close. Such initiatives are for Laboef and Schweinbacher (2018) characteristic of the traditional financing cycle of small businesses and start-ups.

During the course of 2015-2017, *Tifosy* with the help of *COPA90* and Jon Darch began working with clubs such as Brentford and Wycombe Wanderers to create fan crowdfunding projects to fund the installation of new Safe Standing areas at Griffin Park and Adams Park. And at Wycombe, this proposal included the crowdfunding of a *Copa Collective Zone* for Safe Standing Rail Seats alongside a 100,000 signature government petition which if successful would be considered for debate in Parliament. However, one

critical and successful crowdfunding mobilisation occurred in 2017 at Shrewsbury Town after the Supporters Parliament spearheaded a campaign in partnership with the club and *Tifosy* and in doing so, raised the £65,000 target to install 500 Rail Seats in the 10,000 all-seated New Meadow ground (FSF news, 2017). Having played an important brokerage role between independent supporter groups and emerging digital networks, Darch formed a weak tie with James Pollock the Chief Marketing Officer at *Tifosy* and subsequently marketed a sponsorship funding opportunity via his *Safe Standing Roadshow* website in August 2017 noting:

In addition to co-branding of the crowdfunding campaign website and extensive exposure on the club website and that of the Football Supporters Federation, inclusion in press releases and branding of coverage of the construction of this trailblazing Safe Standing area, the opportunity now exists for a headline campaign sponsor to enjoy branding as per the example illustrated above at the area's high profile media launch.

Jon Darch (*Safe Standing Roadshow*, August 2017)

Two months later in October 2017, a five-figure contribution from fan-orientated betting company *FansBet* had successfully completed the ground breaking Safe Standing crowdfunding project at Shrewsbury Town based on a model which would distribute 50 per cent of net profits to participating supporter groups (Darch, *Safe Standing Roadshow* October 2017). And in June 2018, the 500 *Ferco* manufactured Rail Seats were installed ready for use during the 2018/2019 season where Shrewsbury as a League One club were not subject to the all-seating legislation. Consequently, *FansBet*, owned by *Rush Partners Ltd.* became an official sponsorship partner of the *Safe Standing Roadshow* alongside *Ferco* (*Safe Standing Roadshow*, 2017). According to their website, *FansBet* 'is a one of a kind betting platform and the only bookmaker in the world which creates a bond with sports fans by committing to share half of its net profits directly with supporters'. In doing so, it aims to 'work towards forming a genuine bond with fans by teaming up with trusted and accredited fans groups and committees who themselves decide where and when the money returned to them will be spent to help fans' (*FansBet*, 2019).



The expanding digitalization of football culture has produced rhizomatic supporter networks which are switched between the FSF as a SMO and localised supporter groups and in doing so create relational Safe Standing protests in ways which complicate the collective and individual dimensions of movement activism (Edwards, 2014). These mobilisations are characterised by a culture of fan engagement initiatives which have embedded Safe Standing within a corporate discourse informed by notions of social entrepreneurship. Somers (2013) identifies the emergence of contemporary forms of social entrepreneurship as the legacy of New Labour and ‘Third Way’ politics and questions the extent to which social enterprises like crowdfunding initiatives and supporters’ trusts extend or reform modern capitalism. What is clear in this chapter, is that whilst groups such as *StandAMF*, *F.A.N* and *COPA90* produce rhizomatic coalitions seeking to challenge the late capitalist logics of modern football, the digital platforms and networks in which they are embedded both consume and produce modern football culture. Towards the end of this *timescale*, core nodes within the FSF Safe Standing network such as Darch and Brunskill recognised the ways in which digitalization and emerging rhizomatic coalitions enable fans to coalesce around Safe Standing as determinant stakeholders in value co-creation (Zagnoli and Radicchi, 2010). This was important for two reasons. Firstly, it refocused Safe Standing as an issue of ‘stakeholder’ choice embedded in localised communities which benefit both supporters and clubs. In June 2018, the Premier League executive chairman Richard Scudamore recognised this noting;

I think we will look to work with the government in order to create the position where our clubs have choice – which is a local choice based on their own stadia, their own circumstances, in order to enable them to, if they wish, to be able to offer alternatives to all-seated stadiums.

Richard Scudamore (*Premier League*, 8 June cited in Safe Standing Roadshow 2018).

And secondly, the building of social enterprise networks to help fund the rail seating area at Shrewsbury produced new strategic interactions between the club, the local Safety

Advisory Group, the core Safe Standing network and the SGSA during a period in which the Green Guide was being rewritten. Having continued to build relationships with the SGSA over the past couple of years, Darch formed a weak tie with the SGSA's Head of Inspectorate Ken Scott and these interactions were important in ensuring Shrewsbury's application to install rail seating was approved. Consequently, in March 2017 the SGSA granted a request from the Football League to permit rail seating in 21 grounds that are not subject to all-seating requirements. And later that year, they produced formal written guidance on what they referred to as 'dual purpose seating and standing' for the first time and incorporated this into the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Green Guide* in October 2018 under a sub-section titled 'seats incorporating barriers' and 'seats with independent barriers'.

Following the publication of the guide, the SGSA confirmed that it is possible, subject to certain provisos for grounds that include seats incorporating barriers within their provision of exclusively seated accommodation to be licensed as compliant with the all-seating policy (Safe Standing Roadshow, November 2018). For Darch, this is a critical mobilisation because it enables clubs to get such areas of their grounds ready to be operated formally as standing areas if the government's all-seating policy changes (*Safe Standing Roadshow*, November 2018). And perhaps more tellingly, it becomes a mechanism to normalise Rail Seating in English football, not as to create formal standing areas, but instead for the purpose of enhancing safety should fans in those areas continue to stand (Darch, FC Business, October, 2019).

However, the digitalization of Safe Standing and those rhizomatic coalitions formed during this *timescale* pose critical questions regarding the direction of the movement and the ways in which initiatives like crowdfunding function within neoliberal practice and how digital culture is increasingly vulnerable to the pervasive shift of neoliberalism (Gehring, 2016). Whilst ventures like crowdfunding at Shrewsbury create new and efficient ways to put supporter protests into reality, which according to Hsieh et al. (2019) can contribute to

favourable movement outcomes because they connect to the rejuvenation of a public sphere, attention must be paid to who profits most from such ventures and how success is thus determined across leaderless rhizomatic networks. Nonetheless, the networks of networks of networks had successfully reprogrammed the logics of Rail Seating in such a way as to question what constitutes a seat in contemporary football. And having successfully reframed Safe Standing as compliant with the Green Guide's licensing of all-seating legislation, the focus began to shift from safety to consumer choice, whereby it would be up to clubs individually, in consultation with their supporters to decide what mix of standing areas, permitted standing in existing seated areas and seated areas is right for them (FSF *Annual Review*, 2018).

#### “THE VOCAL MINORITY”: STANDING UP FOR CHOICE AND BREAKING DOWN THE STATE

As a member of the DCMS' Expert Working Group on *Football Supporter Ownership and Engagement*, Kevin Miles continued to strengthen his network capital by building weak ties with some politicians who had formed the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Football Supporters in 2015. The APPG, consisting of 45 cross party MP's and 4 Lords, was launched by Gateshead MP and current APPG chair Ian Mearns, a lifelong season ticket holder at Newcastle United who had spoken with Miles at various Newcastle United Supporters Trust events including the Magpie Group's second open meeting in April 2018 (*NUFC Trust*, 2018). Mearns and Miles who are friends on Facebook, have consequently played a collective role in highlighting problems of governance in football at a political level. Additionally, Miles role as FSF Chief Executive ensured he was weakly tied to senior representatives of various Premier League Supporters Trusts and key figures from the Premier League itself including Richard Scudamore, Bill Bush, Kat Allen, Tommy Guthrie,

Rachel Solich and Ash Lord (minutes from *Premier League Supporters Meeting*, March 2018). And according to Brunskill, these ties and interactions have proven to be a very useful ally for fans on issues like Safe Standing, ticket prices, TV kick-off times, and grassroots funding (*FSF News*, 2019).

In January 2016, the Sports Minister and member of the APPG Tracey Crouch announced new measures to give fans a greater voice in football which recognised the need to further build structured dialogue between clubs and supporters by ensuring clubs meet with a representative group of fans at least twice per year. As part of this structured dialogue, the Premier League agreed to provide an additional £1 million in funding for the FSF and SD up to 2019 via the Fans Fund (DCMS, 2016). These networks and interactions thus ensured Miles was able to build alliances with external elites in football which according to Jenkins and Perrow (1977) are crucial for social movement mobilisation and success. Consequently, Miles' network capital was important mechanism for developing strategic interactions with the state which towards the end of this *timescale* began to centralise Safe Standing as a national supporter issue for both the UK government and the Premier League. In doing so, the FSF worked with the APPG to host a Safe Standing supporter event in Committee Room 5 at the Palace of Westminster on Tuesday 12 September 2017 which included a presentation of the newly installed rail seating at Celtic by the clubs Head of Safety Security and Operations Ronnie Hawthorn (*FC Business*, 2017). And thus, core members of the APPG like Mearns operate as a type of institutional activist who pursue movement goals through conventional bureaucratic channels (Santoro and McGuire, 1997) which in turn strengthens their connection with wider movement networks such as Miles and representatives of Supporters Trusts. These connections are important whereby the state and its political institutions are viewed as both the central targets and opportunities of social movements because they engage in contentious politics that involve governments in some way in their claims (Edwards, 2014).

Whilst the chapter has shown how relational networks and tactics have been crucial in framing Rail Seating as an act of counter power against ‘terracing’ and the Hillsborough discourse, the all-seating legislation itself continues to centralise the role of the state and in doing so, is relational to emerging mobilisations on ‘dual purpose seating and standing’ technology. However, networks are important because they evidence how the state itself is not a homogeneous and unified actor that solely provides the context for Safe Standing and FSF related activities. Thus whilst the Sports Minister Tracey Crouch’s position on the legislation remained the same throughout the course of 2017 and early 2018, other state actors including the chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and vice chair of the APPG, Damian Collins MP, called on the government to end the blanket ban on new standing areas in English football and instead permit safety and local authorities to judge on a case by case basis (*FSF News*, 2018).

In March 2018, a cross-party group of MPs including Norman Lamb, Clive Lewis and Chloe Smith wrote to the Home Secretary asking her to meet them to discuss changing the current legislation which prevents clubs from building dedicated Safe Standing areas (*FSF news*, 2018). Duyvendak and Jasper (2015) conceptualise the state as comprising of sub players or actors who engage one another for influence over decisions and thus attention must be paid to the ways in which these players are influenced and constrained by broader social, cultural and political structures. Consequently, instead of a movement facing a state, we need to consider a ‘large co-evolving context in which the characteristics and actions of any contender are facilitated and constrained by the characteristics and actions of all others in the environment’ (Bosi, 2008, p.244). And so in this chapter, I argued that breaking down the state into sub-actors such as those which make up the APPG, the DCMS’ Expert Working Group, and the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee enables a micro-analysis of their specific interactions with movement activists like Miles, Brunskill and other central players within *Supporters’ Trusts* and how they forge relationships across

political arenas which shape and constrain their action on Safe Standing (Goldstone, 2015). These networks and relations are important because they help produce relational strategic interactions with other players and sub-actors like the SGSA, the DCMS, the Football League, and club specific safety officials, and occasionally these interactions create tension and conflict.

One such tension emerged in April 2018 after the Premier League club West Bromwich Albion had a proposal to install 3,600 rail seats in the Smethwick End of their Hawthorns stadium rejected by the DCMS (Conway, 2018). The FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* learned of West Brom's interest in October 2017 after Malcolm Clarke met the club's Director of Operations Mark Miles at a Football Safety Officers Association (FSOA) event. This produced further interactions between Mark Miles and core members of the Safe Standing network including Darch and later Daykin and Miles at an SGSA meeting on 'persistent standing in all-seated stadia. Mark Miles had been agitated into exploring Safe Standing at West Brom after a visit to Celtic Park in December 2016 (Wolverhampton Express & Star, 2016). However, whilst the SGSA referred West Brom's application to the DCMS, Sports Minister Tracey Crouch maintained that 'there is no desire among the top clubs to change the all-seating policy' and claimed that it was only a 'vocal minority' who wanted to see the return of standing in English football (Taylor, 2018; Rumsby, 2018). This prompted an angry response from the FSF with Kevin Miles noting:

I can't understand why the minister has taken this position where there is a general consensus among practitioners in the game, those involved in stewarding, policing and managing grounds that you will never get rid of persistent standing by a minority of fans and that the current regulations are discredited by their unenforceability and they prevent clubs from managing standing sensibly.

Kevin Miles (cited in Rudd, 13 April 2018)

West Brom's application was submitted by the deputy chair of the FSOA and supported by the club's safety advisory group including members of the West Midlands police, the fire

and ambulance services and the SGSA and thus members of the *FSF Safe Standing Google Group Network* sensed that Crouch's position had placed the DCMS in conflict with its own advisory body on safety at sports grounds in England and Wales because the SGSA had concluded that attempts to enforce the all-seating policy had not worked, whilst Crouch was arguing for greater enforcement of regulations to deal with persistent standing (Rumsby, 2018). Consequently, three connected mobilisations occurred throughout the course of April to June 2018. Firstly, Crouch's 'vocal minority' comment created a moral shock (Jasper, 1997) agitating thousands of supporters and fan groups across the country to protest by forming conversational communities on the social networking site Twitter in the form of two hashtags; *#NOTaVocalMinority* and *#WeAreAVocalMinority* which had been mobilised by Amanda Jacks within the *FSF Safe Standing Google Group Network*. Alperstein (2013) notes that Twitter users who tweet the same hashtag do not form a relationship but are located within an issue-bound amorphous group. Consequently, as Cleland et al. (2018) found in their study of Twitter, urban space and supporter led ticket price campaigns, sub-networks of action which are characteristic of Anderson's (1990) notion of 'imagined communities' emerge which produce clusters and forge connections with established media channels which in turn help further diffuse information across a wider network.

Whilst this chapter does not seek to quantitatively measure this Twitter data, I argue that the use of these hashtags helped create an 'esprit de corps' within the core *FSF Safe Standing Google Group Network* and more importantly were used as framing mechanisms to connect a growing sense of agitation with an emerging online protest (observation notes from *FSF Safe Standing Google Group Network*, 2018). This protest in the form of an online e-Parliamentary petition emerged as an individual act of misbehaviour by Owen Riches, a 17 year old college student and Ipswich Town F.C season ticket holder in January 2018. As an A-level Politics student, Riches became interested in learning about the means

by which independent acts of protest could bring about social change and in doing so, sought to use the e-petition process to test its effectiveness on a supporter led issue which he had a personal interest in (Riches, personal interview, 16 April 2019). E-petitions which were originally launched by the Labour government in November 2006 as a mechanism to enable the general public to contact specific government departments, were relaunched by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in July 2011 and ensured that those backed by 100,000 signatures would be considered for debate in Parliament (*House of Commons Library*, 2015).

By April 2018, Riches had a modest Twitter following of approximately 1,000 followers and the petition had reached just short of 3,000 signatures. Having not been a member of the FSF or any Independent Ipswich supporter group, he was not weakly tied to any of the core networks documented during this timescale. However, in learning of Crouch's 'vocal minority' comment and rejection of West Brom's Rail Seat application, Riches sensed he had a new public stage to mobilise the petition and in doing so became an everyday troublemaker who used Twitter as a space of creative non-compliance (Scott, 1990; Jasper, 1997; Edwards, 2014). Consequently, Darch became aware of the e-petition after hundreds of networked supporters began retweeting it and this helped broker a tie between Riches and Darch which mobilised the petition instantly to achieve an average of 17,000 signatures per day (Riches, personal interview, 16th April 2019). Central to this was Darch's network capital and connections to leading sports journalists including Richard Conway from the BBC who reported on the story extensively throughout the course of 2018 to 2019. And thus 16 days after Crouch rejected West Brom's application, the e-petition reached 100,000 on 25th April 2018 and was subsequently considered for debate in Parliament.

Secondly, the success of the e-petition and high profile media criticism of Crouch mobilised senior Labour Party MP's including the deputy leader and MP for West



Bromwich East Tom Watson to publicly call for a reappraisal of West Brom's application and in doing so offer broader support for Safe Standing arguing that it should be the choice of individual clubs as to whether they wished to explore Rail Seating (Watson, 2018). During the second *timescale*, core activists such as Boyle, Powell and Clarke all noted the difficulty in getting the Labour Party to publicly support Safe Standing because of some senior Labour MP's connections with Liverpool and the HFSG. Whilst to some extent this remained a sensitive issue for some Labour MP's during this *timescale*, new MP's who were more supportive of Safe Standing such as the Shadow Minister for Culture, Media and Sport Dr Rosena Allin-Khan reflected an evolving *timescale* in which new political opportunities were opening. And this further recognises the way in which political opportunities themselves are not structures but discursive spaces in which interactions take place through networks (Goldstone, 2004).

By April 2018, Allin-Khan had already met core members of the Safe Standing network after Henry Fowler of the Chelsea Supporters Trust's *Safe Standing Working Group* and new member of the FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* helped arrange a meeting with her team on 30th January in London. This became a Labour Party roundtable meeting at which various supporter representatives from clubs in the Premier League and Championship and other stakeholders were invited. Allin-Khan had previously met Fowler and Darch in Parliament in November 2017 and was briefed on the campaign and strategy moving forward. These connections were important in producing new political opportunities in wake of the successful e-petition, whereby Allin-Khan sent a formal invite to all Supporters' Trusts to attend a Parliamentary roundtable meeting on Safe Standing on Wednesday 6th June. And having started the e-petition, Allin-Khan invited Riches to meet her in London a couple of days prior to discuss the review. Consequently, Riches formed a weak tie with Allin-Khan which saw her follow him on Twitter and in doing so, became a mechanism for Riches to develop his own political capital and connections to other MP's

and journalists, and increase his Twitter following to approximately 6,000. This mutually influencing connection has also seen Riches secure part-time political work with Allin-Khan's office around his full-time education and A-level in Politics (Riches, personal interview, 16th April 2019).

At that meeting, Riches learned that the Labour Party were going to formally announce their support for Safe Standing which became public on Friday 8th June, two days after the Parliamentary roundtable meeting held by Allin-Khan (Labour, org. 2018). At the announcement at Queens Park Rangers' 'Loftus Road' stadium, Allin-Khan noted;

The Labour Party 'want to give the power to the fans, clubs and local safety authorities to allow for a small area inside the stadium to be designated for Safe Standing. This is about safety, the current system isn't working, people are standing in unsafe seated areas and accidents can happen. We would allow the installation of specialised rail seating where appropriate or standing in current seated areas where it can be made safe to do so. Labour's decision is the result of in-depth consultation with football clubs, fans and safety authorities.

Rosena Allin-Khan cited in Labour.org (8 June 2018)

This represented an important political mobilisation at a time when both the Premier League and Football League (EFL) were also making public their support of Safe Standing as a 'local' choice for individual clubs. The EFL's chief executive Shaun Harvey announced the results of a Safe Standing survey conducted between Friday 27 April and Thursday 10 May which specifically targeted fans of EFL clubs but also some fans of Premier League and National League clubs. From over 33,000 responses which included women, men, lapsed season ticket holders and non-season ticket holders, and under and over 35's, a total of 94 per cent agreed that clubs should have the ability to provide licensed standing and seated accommodation. Consequently, Harvey sought to 'robustly' campaign for Safe Standing by asking the government to review the all-seating legislation (BBC, 2018) and this produced a formal connection with the FSF which became a mechanism for launching a joint campaign with a new name; *Stand Up For Choice* (EFL media release

June 2018). This represented the way in which ‘choice’ become a central framing technique within key political mobilisations during the end of this *timescale*.

Whilst Safe Standing continues to be used as a reference point by various stakeholders in football, the tactical decision to centralise ‘choice’ as *the* collective identity frame is characteristic of a political ideology which sought to empower local communities and transfer power from central to local government through the support of co-operatives and social enterprises (*Cabinet Office*, 2010). Presented by the David Cameron led Conservative party as the building of a ‘big society’ at the start of this *timescale*, the commitment to giving local communities more power was underpinned by a civic discourse which in the case of English football reflected the move to give supporters as ‘stakeholders’ more influence (Garcia and Welford, 2015). In one sense, this became an extension and legacy of the ‘Third Way’ *Supporters Trust* movement in the way they sought to protect the interests of localised supporter communities. To achieve this, the government introduced the *Localism Act* in 2011 which aimed to facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government to individuals and communities. For football fans, this legislative scheme provided a way to recognise the importance of spaces like football grounds to a communities’ way of life but acts as a more symbolic tool to garner public support and pressure the club into engagement with local supporters (McDonough, 2016).

However, whilst such initiatives are framed as localising supporter democracy, it is important to question why the PL, after refusing to contemplate a discussion on Safe Standing at the start of the second *timescale* (Hoey, 2001) now support a position which ensures clubs have the choice to offer alternatives to all-seated stadia (Burnton and MacInnes, 2018), when many of the core arguments themselves have remained consistent across different *timescales*. And thus attention must be paid to the ways in which Safe Standing or *Stand Up For Choice* are compatible with the PL brand and the marketing of its product to global audiences. For MacInnes (2016), the PL has become increasingly

concerned with the ‘hush’ inside many all-seated stadia and thus its discussion on Safe Standing is a sign that the league realises something needs to be done to address the problem of atmosphere as a component of its brand.

However, the tactical framing of ‘choice’ by the FSF in June 2018 and the partnership developed with the EFL has been successful in putting pressure on the DCMS during a period of political mobilisation by Allin-Khan and the Labour Party. And by arguing that the PL and the DCMS had been danger of failing behind when it came to listening to ‘customer’ demand (FSF Annual Review 2017), Safe Standing became a movement not against ‘modern’ football, but embedded within the neoliberal *timescape* of ‘modern’ football. *Stand Up For Choice* presented the ‘business case’ against persistent standing in all-seated areas and the all-seating legislation, and in doing so argued that the state, clubs and local safety bodies have a duty of ‘customer care’ to all supporters (FSF, *Stand Up for Choice*, 2019).

And finally, seventeen days after the Labour Party announced their formal support, the Sports Minister Tracey Crouch, at the formal parliamentary debate triggered by the petition on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018, announced that she would commission an official review of the issue and publicly apologised for stating only a ‘vocal minority’ wanted standing areas (BBC, 2018):

Contrary to reports on social media, my mind is open on future of the all-seating policy. I felt so disappointed with my own loose language on Safe Standing that rightly led to outrage but then sadly turned into abuse and threats. I feel really scarred by the response received on social media. At the moment, we don’t have data or evidence to make a decision either way on this issue. Change cannot and should not happen overnight on something as serious as football ground safety.

Tracey Crouch on BBC Sport (25 June 2018).

In the lead up to the parliamentary debate, the FSF developed a strategy which connected three central tactics and conventions. Firstly, to work on political mobilisations which included liaising with the APPG to identify other supportive MP’s who would be willing

to contribute and consider the various counter arguments which were likely to be posed. Secondly, to work on supporter mobilisations which involved encouraging members to lobby their local MPs to take part in the debate. And thirdly, to mobilise the media effectively by using various journalistic networks established over the past decade to help set the tone for the debate and ensure fans' views were represented (observations from FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network*; FSF *Annual Review 2018*). Consequently, it produced a *Stand Up For Choice* briefing paper for MPs ahead of the debate which noted whilst Rail Seating had become one important technology clubs can use to offer such choice of standing to their supporters, Safe Standing supported lower cost alternatives for clubs outside of the Premier League such as licensed standing areas of standing in seated areas. For the FSF, this is an important position to take because it opposes any clampdown aimed at supporters engaged in persistent standing in all-seated areas and thus argue that clubs, in consultation with their supporters, local Safety Advisory Groups, police and other stakeholders, should be free to implement whichever licensed technologies they feel work for them, to be introduced alongside appropriate risk analysis and dynamic stewarding arrangements (FSF *MPs Briefing Paper*, 2018). However, independent of the core FSF strategy, Darch helped Riches produce a written letter to all 315 Conservative Party MPs, including the Prime Minister Theresa May, which focused on Rail Seating as installed at Celtic and encouraged MPs to meet himself and Darch prior to the debate commencing in order to see the roadshow for themselves (Riches, personal interview, 16th April 2019). And during the subsequent debate itself, the tone very much focused on new technology like Rail Seating used in Germany and elsewhere, but which would not necessarily require legislative change.

Three months later, in September 2018, Richard Conway of the BBC (2018), and Martyn Ziegler of the *Times* (2018) reported that the subsequent review commissioned by Crouch would look at whether supporter behaviour would be worse if allowed to stand than

when they are seated and sought to examine research on the risk of injury to fans persistently standing in seated areas. And thus the emphasis again on safety and management of crowd behaviour were at odds with the way in which the *Stand Up For Choice* campaign had mobilised during the end of this *timescale*. After a few months delay, the DCMS commissioned *CFE*, an independent social research company to collect the evidence required as part of their review and on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018, I, as an academic postgraduate researcher investigating Safe Standing was approached via email by one of the research managers Dr Joanna Welford. In it, Welford, who herself had published research into supporters and football governance (Garcia and Welford, 2015), noted that a recent paper I had published in 2017 which contextualised the current campaign had been included in the review and given my knowledge of the area, asked if I would participate in a telephone conversation to be officially consulted, to which I agreed. Moreover, she confirmed that ‘safety’ remained the primary focus of the review but accepted that there is limited evidence as to whether reintroducing standing at the top level of English football would make grounds more or less safe. A few months later in March 2019, the core FSF *Safe Standing Google Group Network* received an update of the review from Fiona Wood at the SGSA noting that due to the current Hillsborough trials, the reports publication should not be seen to prejudice that process and thus as I close this chapter, the timeframe for the report’s release remains unclear.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter argued that whilst most supporter activists within the Safe Standing movement remain critical of the neoliberal *timescape* of English football, the tactics and mobilisations adopted are themselves embedded within the neoliberal discourse of ‘modern’ football. To some extent, this is characteristic of what Kennedy and Kennedy (2013) argue in their critique of left wing supporter movements, that being, even amongst supporters critical of the lurch in football governance toward naked marketization of the game, there is a tendency to fall in with the type of economic rationality that now permeates football. The FSF has become an effective SMO in terms of advocating more sustainable forms of governance and community based enterprises, however the Safe Standing movement which it coordinates, has moved beyond mobilising supporters around ideas of tradition and collective consciousness. Instead, as someone consulted for the formal government review into the safety of modern standing areas and having become an *insider* within the core FSF network, I argued that Rail Seating became a key tactic in breaking down the state and its sub-actors by presenting the business case to achieve greater (supporter) stakeholder choice. From this perspective, whilst Rail Seating seeks to bring about a long-term change to the all-seating legislation, it continues to operate within the parameters of that legislation through innovation. To achieve this, the adoption of Rail Seating as a movement for greater customer care, has been successful in making the case against current conventional seating. And by focusing on the technical aspects of protest, it became characteristic of what Numerato (2018) argued as the expression of *reflexivity* within anti-neoliberal initiatives which both enhance and limit social change through the cooption of business like language. Through this lens, modern Rail Seating technology is being installed at some high profile PL clubs as compatible with the current all-seating legislation, seeking to overcome those problems associated with the persistent standing of fans. This is significant, because it demonstrates the ways in which movements which move across multiple *timescales*, adopt

tactics and produce movement outcomes which were, in some cases, likely unintended (Giugni, 1998).

And, in doing so, this poses questions regarding the extent to which Safe Standing as a social movement, moves *against* the criminalization and social control of supporters in all-seated stadia, which remains *the* legacy of Hillsborough, and *the* assault on the *lifeworld* and ritual of watching football. Instead, I argue that the willingness of the PL to support individual clubs and their plans to install Rail Seating, must be seen as part of social movement co-optation (Miller, 1999). From this perspective, Safe Standing as a movement *for* Rail Seating, is considered compatible with the PL's brand and the marketing of its product globally. Consequently, social movements which to some extent become co-opted by opponents are unlikely to control the future pace and focus of the movement. In October 2019, the DCMS' standing at football rapid evidence review concluded that 'there is not a robust body of evidence to suggest that standing in its current form, either on traditional terracing or modern dual purpose options is anymore or less safe than sitting' (CFE, 2019, p.28). And that 'there is significant scope for further research to build an evidence base to trial different standing areas alongside monitoring clubs taking different approaches to the management of standing' (CFE, 2019, p.6). Whilst the review offered some useful future policy recommendations, ultimately it failed to move the debate forward. Moreover, the focus on safety and stakeholder choice failed to answer the report's own question of why does persistent standing occur. To answer this question, future research and policy makers must recognise the importance of the ritual of watching football.



## CONCLUSION

### A TEMPORAL VIEW OF FOOTBALL SUPPORTER SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This thesis has presented a social movement analysis of Safe Standing and in doing so, produced a largely untold thirty year social history of football supporter activism in English football from 1989-2019. To achieve this, it applied a relational sociology approach (Crossley, 2011; 2015) to capture the importance of football supporter networks, relationships and interactions which built this social movement across different *timescales*. In this thesis, I argued that Gillan's (2018) critique of social movements as having a fuzzy temporality, offered a framework through which different *timescales*, with their own temporal conditions, could be explored. Adopting this framework, the thesis qualitatively analysed three distinct ten year periods, or what Gillan (2018) called *timescales*, from 1989-2019, in a way which saw some compatibility between relational sociology and hermeneutics. This offered an original contribution to knowledge of football supporter social movements through the rich micro-level analysis of *the* most important issue which fans collectively coalesce around, and the legacy of *the* worst sporting disaster in the UK, which has dominated public consciousness for thirty years. And as a social movement, Safe Standing is one of the most important recent development in the game, because it evidences how supporters, who have been deeply affected by the all-seating legislation, are now in a position to affect the future consumption of English football. My analysis showed how this was achieved, and argued that a small core network of approximately 30 supporters, to which I gained *insider* access, stand to potentially impact and shape the consumption habits of a leisure practice all over the world.

In doing so, the thesis advances the social scientific study of English football fandom by arguing that whilst club-specific protests are often more effective in both

agitating and mobilising parochial supporter networks, attention must be paid to the coalitions which switch these networks together across a longer *timescale*. This enables research to identify the mechanisms and dynamics which build and sustain a social movement as opposed to a short term protest or campaign. These coalitions in football are potentially very powerful in the way they enable rival supporter networks to connect to collective discourses like *Against Modern Football*, *Football without Fans is Nothing*, *Supporters Not Customers* and *Safe Standing* or *Stand Up For Choice*. And whilst the localising of these discourses continues to be an important and effective tactic for successful mobilisation, football supporter coalition networks are in some cases, able to bring these discourses into national and transnational spaces and contexts, and in doing so become effective political actors.

In the thesis' introduction, the research question was set out in two parts to offer a temporal analysis of the Safe Standing movement. The first part sought to understand the ways in which the Safe Standing network of social relationships and interactions, and the particular strains and grievances which are embedded within supporters' biographies, and their tactics, may have changed and evolved across different *timescales*. Whilst the second part sought to investigate what the key characteristics of this movement, including conflict, organisational form and intersubjective motivations revealed about its socio-political environment. To operationalise this research question, I set out four aims. Here, each aim will be addressed and drawn together to answer the research question. Then the findings will be reflected upon to consider what this case reveals about football supporter social movements and relational sociology, before future directions in this research area will be considered.

The first aim asked when, how and why the movement against the all-seating legislation emerged and was mainly addressed in chapters 4 and 5. These chapters showed that the mobilisation of both collective and club-specific campaigns for new terracing or

alternative standing areas, was a consequence of the coordination mechanisms which helped build the FSF as a national SMO. Consequently, in chapter 5, I showed how a small core Safe Standing network emerged from the relationships and interactions established across leading ISAs, the *CoFS* and FSA relational fields. These football supporters became a homophilous cluster because they shared similar political tastes which helped build the solidarity, trust and situational definitions of ‘modern football’. In doing so, they produced relational collective action across two *timescales* which interacted politically, through an ideological commitment to a post-Thatcherite and ‘Third Way’ social democracy embraced by New Labour.

The second aim sought to map the networks and biographies of core supporter activists across different *timescales* by considering how they were recruited and what roles they adopted. This was addressed across chapters 4, 5 and 6 by identifying both the macro and micro-level strategic interactions which built this thirty year social history of football supporter activism in English football. Across these chapters I showed that those who took on specialised roles within the FSA, leading ISAs, the *CoFS* and the FSF, such as national and regional chairs, branch contacts, national committee or council members and campaign coordinators, were often found in larger populations notably cities such as Liverpool, London, Sheffield, Birmingham, Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester and Southampton. Together, they constituted a critical mass because as Crossley (2015) argued, in larger populations the connecting of resources, communication, capital and collective effervescence is more successful. And many of these supporters, hailing from the middle class, and having attended university, included academics, police officers, trade union activists, businessmen and journalists, and held prior social ties to key people inside individual football clubs and the wider industry. In mapping these networks across three *timescales*, I identified important switchers with cultural capital who helped build relational collective action on supporter issues with wider national significance. Through this lens,

the emergence of Safe Standing as a formal FSF coordinated movement in chapters 5 and 6 became part a broader social movement dynamic which sought to gain greater supporter representation within the decision making structures and governance of English football. And the small core FSF Safe Standing network which emerged in chapter 6, was very much a consequence of the coordination mechanisms which helped build coalition based collective action in chapters 4 and 5, but became more effective as a movement with some influence inside the football industry.

The third aim sought to investigate the ways in which the Safe Standing movement communicated and coordinated relational collective action, and this was addressed in chapters 5 and 6. These chapters showed the ways in which FSA and FSF National Conferences and the Fans Parliament provided a specific geographical location through which supporter friendships and cooperation networks were formed. In doing so, they became *working utopias* by providing spaces where supporters learned how to perceive, think and develop tactics in relation to other members of the supporter activist community. Whilst club-specific supporter networks used local pubs and supporters' clubs as *foci*, which provided opportunities to devise club-specific protest strategies, the social activities within and around national conferences were important in building an *esprit de corps* on Safe Standing and a situational definition of what the movement moved *for* and *against*. These narratives and frames were diffused through FSF newsletters, magazines, annual reports, national and club-specific fanzines by supporters hailing from the creative class who introduced greater visual creativity into the marketing and communication of the Safe Standing movement. However, the most significant convention which emerged across these two *timescales*, was the use of the internet as a communication channel in the 'world' of the Safe Standing network (Becker, 1974, 1976; Crossley, 2011). This ensured the successful diffusion of the Safe Standing movement's formal report in 2007 via the FSF's official website and the development of a more prominent online social media profile. I

also showed how the internet facilitated the development of a small core FSF *Safe Standing Google Group* intra-network from 2011-2019 which further helped build trust amongst supporters, and in turn, developed a Safe Standing network identity formation within the group (Kadar, 2013). And finally, in chapter 6, I showed how the Safe Standing movement became part of a hyperdigitalisation of football culture through the ways in which the internet and social media produced rhizomatic supporter coalition networks which challenged the capitalist logics of modern football, but at the same time, through the digital platforms they used, both consumed and produced modern football culture.

Finally, the fourth aim sought to investigate the specific tactics, strategies, narratives and innovations through which the mobilisation of the movement could be driven across three *timescales*. This was principally addressed in chapters 5 and 6 which showed that movements *move* across a ground which is always shifting, and in doing so come into conflict with opponents who themselves adapt to a changing social, cultural and political landscape or *timescape*. The initial small-scale protests coordinated by the *CoFS* in chapter 4, *moved against* the increasing criminalisation of football supporters and assault on traditional supporter culture, and in doing so, *moved for* greater supporter democracy and rights to retain aspects of standing (terraced) culture. However, in chapters 4 and 5, I showed how Hillsborough and standing had become inseparable which produced little political appetite for changing the all-seating legislation. Through this lens, all-seated stadia became *the* legacy of Hillsborough and characterised English football's modernity and the increasing power of the PL's global product. As such, chapters 5 and 6 documented the ways in which football supporter networks and prior social ties to transnational supporter groups became a mechanism to identify German football as a political and cultural opportunity to shape debates around supporter ownership and Safe Standing. In doing so, I showed how the successful reprogramming of Safe Standing, *from* a movement for new terracing, *to* a movement for modern Rail Seating technology produced a new master frame,

which in turn widened the strategic interactions beyond the state, to club chairmen, supporter groups, local safety officers and police associations. And this became particularly effective throughout the course of chapter 6, because Safe Standing became less a ‘rhetoric of reaction’ and instead a ‘rhetoric of change’. Consequently, the Safe Standing movement became characterised by repertoires of contention which were culturally available and shaped by cultural meanings in historical contexts.

In this chapter, I argued that whilst political opportunities are important structures which both enable and constrain movement action, attention must be paid to the creativity and innovation of supporter networks themselves, and their weak ties to people within the decision making structures of English football and corporate entrepreneurs. This was important because I showed how the switching of supporter networks at Celtic and Liverpool was achieved independent of the changing political climate on Hillsborough. Alongside this, the localising of Safe Standing amongst club-specific supporter groups produced rhizomatic networks and mobilisations across new online and urban spaces. In some cases, this characterised the Safe Standing movement as consisting of some independent supporter groups and individuals operating independently of the FSF by doing collective action on their own. And this became a mechanism to explore corporate partnerships which were informed by notions of social entrepreneurship. Finally, in chapter 6, I argued that the digitalisation of Safe Standing enabled supporters to coalesce around the movement as stakeholders in value co-creation, and this produced new strategic interactions amongst individual football clubs and local safety authorities. Together, these tactical innovations produced movement consequences which enabled a small core Safe Standing network to become political actors, and in a position to affect the future consumption of English football.

Each aim showed that movements like Safe Standing cannot be understood without recognising the wider social, cultural and political contexts in which they are both situated

and move. Having adopted Gillan's use of *timescape* as a concept to specify the macro-level spatio-temporal boundaries in which the actions of Safe Standing as a movement, were located, I argued that the new consumption of English football post-Hillsborough and the birth of the PL, produced a neoliberal *timescape* which informed English football's transformation. And central to this, was the imposition of all-seated stadia as *the* method to socially control and discipline the traditional ritual of watching football. This was important because it contextualised the building of football supporter coalition networks within and around the FSA, fanzines and ISAs, as sharing a broad identity; that being what constituted the appropriate consumption of football, namely a common experience imagined as traditional, whilst committed to supporter social democracy and opposed to the increasing neoliberalisation of the game. However, my research showed that the development of new creative strategies, framing and human action, inevitably brought about some changes to the core network structure of movements. And whilst Crossley (2011) rightly argued, these networks, relationships and interactions were the product of a history of previous networks, relationships and interactions, they evidenced the way in which movements are often heterogeneous in their goals, and produce movement outcomes which are in some cases, likely unintended (Giugni, 1998).

For some actors within the movement, the emphasis on Rail Seating or seats incorporating barriers as 'licensed standing areas' has been successful in deconstructing the various safety arguments often presented as key obstacles. However for others, Safe Standing retains many of the core arguments presented during the first *timescale* on the issue of supporter democracy and it is this which potentially connects supporters across all levels of football. And so whilst these are not mutually exclusive, they evidence the way in which Safe Standing moves not *against* 'modern' football but is instead embedded within the neoliberal *timescape* of modern football. This is an important critical insight into both the opportunities and limitations of football supporter movements. In this case, the

characteristics of a movement like Safe Standing, including what it moves *for* and *against*, and the intersubjective motivations of supporter activists, reveals what Gillan (2018) described as a multitude of social, cultural, economic and political *vectors*, which mobilise in different directions with different *velocities*. In doing so, movements produce consequences, and these consequences, I argue, are tied to a temporal analysis in which mobilisation, action and demobilisation are linked together.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

From this research, there are three emergent research questions which could be addressed in future research projects. To begin, throughout this thesis, the one thing which connects all three *timescales* independent of the various changing networks, tactics and mobilisations is the culture of fans persistently standing in all-seated areas. Edwards (2014) argued that there is a need to think of protest in terms of movements and what happens outside of them which complicates the collective and individual dimensions of movement activism. In doing so, it is important to consider the role of *misbehaviour* as a mechanism for potential movement mobilisation. Future research could thus explore the ways in which football supporter movements like Safe Standing build relational collective action through organised supporter groups or SMO's like the FSF, but also those unorganised bits of action like persistent standing and how they intersect in interesting ways. As such, supporter movement research should pay attention to the real stuff of human agency which is able to break down the state because it has a durability in creating sustained conflict with opponents.

Secondly, upon learning of the DCMS' standing at football review's conclusions as I finished this thesis, I recognise that future research to 'build an evidence base to trial different standing areas alongside monitoring clubs taking different approaches to the



management of standing' (2019, p.6) continues to reinforce the importance of safety and stakeholder choice. This thesis has shown how to an extent, the questioning of further evidence on safety is a logical outcome of a movement which has reframed core arguments in such ways as to keep the movement moving. However, the report fails to address in any clear way, why many football supporters have continued to stand in all-seated areas over the past twenty five years and thus attention should be paid to understanding the sociological importance of the ritual of watching football and supporters' interaction with the game. Moreover, the tactical emphasis on Rail Seating as dual purpose and compatible with the all-seating legislation in English football raises several important questions for future policy directions.

For example, what would be the value and indeed vested interests of high profile PL clubs in changing conventional all-seated areas to Rail Seating? And what are the practical challenges of policing the all-seating legislation in Rail Seating areas as opposed to conventional all-seated areas? In what ways might this tactic create conflict between supporters of clubs across different levels of football, where standing terraces, which meet the safety guidelines as set out by the SGSAs *Green Guide*, are perceived differently than Rail Seating if the legislation changes. In other words, if a club with terracing is promoted to the Championship, would a change to the all-seating legislation include Rail Seating only, as a legitimate form of standing, or would it extend to other (terraced) standing areas. And finally, if those with a vested interest in normalising Rail Seating are successful in getting high profile PL clubs to install such technology, so as to enhance the safety of those persistently standing, to what extent does a change in the all-seating legislation itself continue to become the movement's primary aim?

Thirdly, one critically important question for future research, is also the thesis' main limitation. Throughout this research I have continued to question my own role in the research process and recognise that the majority of activists interviewed, like myself, are

white able-bodied men. This poses important sociological questions regarding Safe Standing as both a gendered and racialised movement. In doing so, future research should consider what these networks reveal about the construction of race, gender and disability within football supporter movements, and thus look to explore the experiences of supporter minorities.

Finally, it is important to recognise, that whilst I did not use formal quantitative SNA in this research to visualise the core network changes and structural properties across multiple *timescales*, this should not be ruled out for future research. Indeed this method of analysis might be particularly useful for future publications of this research to show three different sociograms which characterise the core supporter networks across each *timescale*. And in reflecting on supporter social networks themselves, it is important to state that they are incredibly difficult to research, and thus inevitably there will be some errors or omissions across this thirty year social history. However, research should nonetheless continue to investigate supporter networks by focusing on core actors as a way into the *lifeworld* of particular groups.

## FINAL REMARKS

Let's do for football what CAMRA has done for real ale ... listen you'll never have a mass movement here, it just doesn't work like that. What you need are thousands and thousands of members ... you'll get that, but you won't have half a million which is the number of football fans which go to a Saturday match afternoon or anywhere near it because that's the way people are ... but he said if you're well organised ... and if you do truly represent them ... then erm ... you know ... you'll able to do the job.

Rogan Taylor (personal interview, 25 January 2016)

This supporter wrote a letter to the newly formed FSA in October 1985. In doing so, he alluded to what Mancur Olson defined as the 'logic of collective action'. Olson argued that 'unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their

common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve common or group interests' (1965, p.2). This problem centres on the peculiar logic of collective action and the distinction between what are, according to rational actor theorists, considered public or private goods. What characterise public goods are what 'members of a given population stand to gain from them, whether or not they do anything to help achieve them' (Crossley, 2002, p.61). In this thesis, I recognised the limitations of building large membership based supporter movements in English football where parochial supporter networks continue to be more concerned with club-specific issues. However, I showed that the networking of a critical mass of highly interested and resourceful supporter actors who are able to communicate effectively with one another is possible. This is an important mechanism through which football supporter networks can build relational collective action across different, but connecting *timescales*, and in doing so, form coalition based social movements with some degree of influence within the decision making structures and governance of English football. In this sense, the number of supporters, as members of SMOs like the FSA or FSF, is not significant for the successful mobilisation of a social movement. In the case of Safe Standing, I argued that as a ritual and cultural practice, consumed and experienced by men and women across all parts of society, including government, the civil service, the police, academia and law, and not just 'traditional' 'working class' communities, English football is a *lifeworld* with a rich array of resources and networks. As such, the all-seating legislation impacts many supporters within this *lifeworld* and in some cases, the people with power to make changes or become important political actors are football fans themselves. And the 'freedom' or 'choice' to experience the ritual of watching football in particular ways, which includes both standing and seating, brings into question what type of society we are and the ways in which some groups are subject to more governmental control than others.

Whilst football supporters have, through the building of the Safe Standing movement, become political actors who stand to potentially impact and shape the consumption habits of a leisure practice and ritual all over the world, what gives this movement its real power, is not a potential change or relaxing of the legislation, but the ritual of watching football itself. And whilst the all-seating legislation, I argue, became *the* most significant assault on football supporter culture, the collective memories and meanings which football supporters give to this ritual, through those relationships and interactions formed together, continues to be important in an ever expanding neoliberal *timescape* of English football. This ritual, continues to be expressed because in the top two divisions in England, thousands of supporters at games each weekend, continue to stand at football matches, and in doing so, subvert the dominant way of watching modern football in all-seated stadia. Through this lens, the *misbehaviour* of standing, is *the* ritual which gives *the* movement against the all-seating legislation, its power.

To close, it is worth noting that towards the end of this research, on Thursday 22 November 2018, supporters met to finalise a merger of the FSF and SD into a new unified organisation. This 'new' organisation, would once again be called the Football Supporters Association (FSA).

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