



Case Report

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# Football Supporter Alienation Associated with the Growth of Commodification and Commercialization in the Modern Game: A Marxist Critique of English Football



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**Keywords:** Class fan's; Capitalism; Working-class sport; Commercialization; Emotional attachment; Labor-power; New stadiums

**Abbreviations:** EPL: English Premier League; FA: Financial Power; PLC: Public Limited Company; ISA: Independent Supporters Association; SU: Shareholders United

## Case Report

Football is evolving. From what was a working-class fan's weekly relief from the ills of capitalism, football has now become the very embodiment of the system itself. The modern fan see the hierarchy of their football club, especially at the very top level, acting solely in the interest of profit maximization and dragging their values through the dirt as they seek to commodify their life-long passion to the point that it has become unrecognizable. A club's identity is its heart and soul for many supporters and traditions built upon 100 years of history in most cases, is being lost in this transition into the new age. Capitalism cares nothing for the beloved integrity or heart of a football club but conversely seeks to rip that heart out of the institution, alienating fans and communities from any sense of identity. For a communal feel to return to football, it is vital that football morphs back to its classification as a working-class sport and its roots are restored for fans to identify with their beloved game once more.

In this piece we will analyze Karl Marx's of alienation relation to the English Premier League (EPL) and its abundant relevance to the movement football has undertaken as it transitions to a capitalistic age. EPL football clubs have fell foul to this estrangement through the increased commercialization

and commodification of the match-day experience and it is important to address these issues as well as the fans' resistance in protecting their clubs from losing their identity. Looking at three key cases studies focusing on Wimbledon AFC, Manchester United FC and Manchester City FC, you will be able to see Marxist theories in action and how these theories reveal tarnished football communities and their vision to what their club is. This piece attempts to address the current trend of commercialization within the English game and the commodification of the English Premier League (EPL), in particular, that has occurred since the early-1990s. Conn D [1] proposes that through this process of commercialization, traditional working-class football fans have become alienated from the clubs they adoringly support. Football has undergone a process not dissimilar to that of an industrial revolution with clubs, instead of being owned by a community of supporters, are owned by private investors who may have no emotional attachment to the club and its supporters. Goldblatt D [2] argues that these owners use the clubs to generate surplus-value for their own capitalist agenda, alienating supporters in a Marxist sense form the club's production. The specific form of alienation investigated in this report is one proposed by Penny & Redhead [3] whereby fans become alienated due to stadium

relocation, a trend that has become increasingly popular amongst (EPL) clubs in recent years. Fans lose the historical sense of place created within the old stadium as it is replaced by a new placeless arena design, solely for the purpose of selling a higher quantity of more expensive tickets and bombarding fans with advertising. Finally, the anti-neoliberal movement of fans, in response to the growing commercialization of football is discussed followed by fans' resistance to these growing trends within the English game and their efforts to transition through this evolution of the industry.

### Commercialization

Hochschild (2012) defines commercialization as the process within which a new product is brought into the marketplace. Commercialization of a product usually results in that product which may or may not have previously been utilized by people being transformed into a commodity. The product is sold to a mass market of consumers in order to generate wealth for the owners of its production. Karl Marx defines commodification within a capitalist system of production as the transformation of goods, services, ideas or even people into commodities or objects of trade. Through the process of commodification, the object in question is assigned a new value, not its use-value to the creator or manufacturer but its exchange-value to the consumer. Capitalism is criticized as a mode of production as it results in the commodification of almost everything, including the human labour-power. Marx criticized this process of commodification believing that some things shouldn't have an economic value attached to them. The commodification of football has resulted in a monetary value being placed upon the ability of fans to exercise their fandom with the cost of admission to games ever increasing in today's market. We argue that the act of supporting a football team has a profound impact on the lives of fans as they use it to construct relationships, memories, and individual identities. This being the case, the commodification of football is criticized as an exchange-value shouldn't be placed on something so important and integral to the way of life for so many people and hence results in the inability of some to exercise their fandom. Conn D [1] states that football was, once upon a time, a working-class sport, a game used by the average man to relieve the monotony and hardship of a working-class life spent in a factory or shipyard. A struggle created by the advent of capitalism is removal of the human being from his natural state and into a world of cash nexus. Redhead S [4] further proposed that a "man's game" is being turned into a media event for mass consumption, the result being a resurgence of hooliganism within football in the 1990's in response to this bourgeoisification of football. Goldblatt D [2] discusses the commercialization of football, beginning in the 1990's due to the formation of the (EPL). TV and media rights were sold to Rupert Murdoch's media empire and games shown through his TV stations which fans were charged to watch. Ticket prices have increased since this event, in some cases exceeding a 700% increase over 20 years. Goldblatt D [2] further proposes that the

purchasing of clubs by rich businessmen have exacerbated the problem. Clubs are now being run as businesses for the purpose of creating surplus-value for their owners rather than for the good of the community of supporters [5]. Highlights an increase in advertising within football grounds, not just those presented to supporters all throughout stadiums but also on the strips of the team. As more stakeholders such as media companies, sponsors, private investors and governing bodies alike attempt to control an ever-increasing share of the profit generated, the clubs become further removed from their working-class roots. Goldblatt D [2] identifies the increase in players' wages and transfer fees occurring in the past two decades, with players now being bought and sold for astronomical amounts of money frequently and in some cases, exceeding £100 million. Through this enormous influx of cash into the game, [1] argues that football has undergone its own period of industrial revolution. New stadiums have been erected all over the country, some in response to health and safety regulations imposed by the Taylor Report and some to increase the number of supporters that can be charged for attending matches. This removes football from its communal roots, where the game was run by the Football Association (FA) whose purpose, was to maintain the integrity of the sport, keeping it separated from politics or socio-economic issues. Through increased private ownership a capitalist doctrine has emerged where football, like so many other things, has become nothing more than a commodity. Kennedy P [6] propose that through this change, football fandom has also undergone a period of transformation, not unlike what was witnessed through the burgeoning of capitalism, whereby feudal ties were ripped apart, replaced by only one measure of value, commodity prices. The average fan is indistinguishable from the pre- industrial revolution laborer in that his connection to the production of his labour are removed. His only measure of participation now is the money which he spends on the game. Resulting in a distancing of classes, as Marx theorized, society develops through periods of class struggle; capitalism creates an ever-widening gap between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Football as an industry has become a tool of the capitalist system, seeking only to maximize surplus value for those who own its means of production.

### Commodification

Conn D [1] states that football, being at the heart of British culture, once stood for passion, community, honor, and even beauty. However, it is now in danger of losing these connections for the traditional working-class community of supporters and even, losing its soul. Conn D [1] argues that the role of the Football Association (FA), having created the modern rules of football in 1863, was to protect the sporting values of the game. However, the FA abandoned these principles in the 1990s after allowing the creation of an English Premier League (EPL), due to pressure from the biggest clubs in England at the time. They did this in order to increase the amount of wealth that could be created from the newly formed (EPL). Malcolm D [5] analyzed the commodification

of English Football, identifying the key participants and their sources of power within his “football figuration”. In recent years the balance of power between the participants has changed dramatically as clubs have shifted from having community stakeholders to attaining public limited company (PLC) status, thus shifting the balance of power away from fans and towards the various television companies, shareholders of the clubs, and sponsors who seek to commodify football for profit. Malcolm D [5] proposes a figuration whereby club owners with substantial wealth make many critical decisions, in addition to media companies with substantial financial power. The (FA) has some power given its historical significance but nowhere near that of the owners or media companies. The players enjoy social status and may act collectively through membership of the professional footballers’ association. Malcolm D [5] describes fans as being alienated, an amorphous group with the least power of any stakeholder group. These articles highlight two important points, firstly, that English football began a journey of commodification through the formation of the (EPL), changing the landscape of English Football. Secondly, these changes have resulted in increased alienation, in the Marxist sense, experienced by supporters. Marx proposed that capitalism results in the commodification of most products produced within an industry and the owners of the means of production then sell these products for the purpose of profit maximization. This commodification results in the alienation of the worker reflected in Marx’s proposed four-fold theory of alienation whereby the worker is alienated from the products produced, the act of producing, and from other workers. Alienation arises within the capitalist mode of production as the laborer is forced to sell his labour-power, this being the only commodity he has to offer as it is not, he who owns the means of production but the bourgeoisie.

Malcolm D [5] addresses this alienation of fans in his article by investigating the emergence of the Independent Supporters Association (ISA) in the 1990s. The author argues that the growing number of (ISA) members is proof of alienation as it signifies the social exclusion experienced by fans. Particularly those who engaged in traditional “fan behavior” such as standing up, singing, and protesting the establishment who have forced fan groups to abandon their traditions in order to comply with the new rules of the (EPL). Malcolm D [5] does, however, state that fan activism in this sense may be explained by poor team performance rather than socio-political, economic or regulatory factors. The author also finds little link between the growth of (ISA) members and the modernization of football, in that few members have been actively excluded from games. What is most significant is the change in fan experience and power relations that have resulted from the transformation of football from a working-class community game to a global commodity. Hirst P [7] examined how different spaces under different social and political conditions are constructed by forces of conflict and political/social power. Concluding that spaces are resources of power, the relationship between space and power is complex. [3] investigate the effect of physical football

stadia on the alienation of fans in terms of a sense of place. They describe traditional football stadiums as being historical social spaces where people’s deep connection with the geographical areas lead to identity formation and development of a sense of place within the stadium. Several authors have investigated the change witnessed in the use of sports stadia in recent years. Austrian Z [8] investigate the economic development effects on downtown American cities, arguing that the building of sports stadiums was used to generate economic growth. The authors show that clubs use sports stadiums as commodities for wealth creation, not as a place of community or purpose of a team. Austrian Z [8] argue that, if sports facilities do shift economic development, the measure of success should not be economic growth but whether the downtown environment was enhanced or sustained. Ahlfeldt G [9] study the impact that three sports facilities had on the value of land in Germany. A positive increase was identified in the desirability of the location to both businesses and homeowners; however, negative effects were experienced by existing homeowners due to increased congestion and noise. Ahlfeldt G [9] also show that government subsidies often contribute to the construction of stadia; however, it is often the public that must suffer the consequences of reduced house prices. These articles show the change from the traditional sporting stadia constructed solely for the purpose of supporting a team and the new government-backed construction of multiple purpose-built stadiums used to generate wealth. Bélanger A [10] used the example of Montreal’s forum to show the transformation in sporting spaces. The acquisition of this space by a global corporation alienated users of the space in many ways. Bélanger A [10] highlights how the change in Montreal from an industrial to post-industrial space has altered the relations of production and consumption, resulting in a reimagining of urban public spaces. The author focuses on the power of the owners as a dominant force to involve memories of the old space in the new stadia in order to reduce the alienation experienced by fans. Rather than including the history of the team within the space, the owners used the space to highlight the economic development that the new stadium represented. This article highlights the use of sporting stadia by private owners for the commodification of sport as a viewing spectacle rather than a traditional place of meaning and historical significance to the fans. [11] state that sport, particularly football, is hugely important in terms of the reproduction and construction of individual identities in a modern society. [3] concur with [11] that little attention has been paid to the importance of sporting spaces and how they contribute to identity formation. [12] advocates a geographical approach to analysis like that of Bairner A [11] identifying differing meanings attached to football stadiums to different groups of stakeholders. Bale J [12] found the spatial organization of British football grounds has had both a negative and positive impact on the local environment. However, this impact will change due to the new pressures placed on clubs to relocate to new grounds, normally

well outside the city or town of the club. Bale J [12] shows that football stadia in England have and are changing from traditional inner-city grounds that engage with local communities to a modern placeless area design. The supporters of team's place significance upon the sporting ground not unlike a religious significance placed upon a church. The removal of football stadiums from local communities' results in alienation for both fans and the local community. Bale J [12] splits the community into two groups: The urban community and the second community. The urban community is the rough geographical area of the ground itself or the town/city which the team is named after, whereas the second community is situated near the ground such as local businesses. [12] shows that both groups are alienated by relocation to a new stadium, but it is those who live and work closest to the ground itself, The Second Community, that are alienated most. The distance between the club and community and the location of the stadium itself are key factors in determining the effect that a football club has on the local community. It is therefore clear that the sporting stadia or space has an important role in the relations that exist between fans, its community, and the club itself. Bale J [12] does, however, regard football as a representational sport in that football clubs can metaphorically represent all manner of places whether they are small towns or entire nations. A Bohemian Praha 1905 FC, based in Vršovice, Prague, represents a very small catchment area, for example, as the bigger club, Slavia Prague, has its stadium located only 1.0 kilometer away. The urban community as described by Bale (2000) [12] can exist in a multitude of ways; fans need not be residents of a specific geographical area to interact with the club. For example, Manchester United has a large fan base in both India and East Asia. Penny S [3] & Church A [13] identify the significance placed upon football stadiums by supporters of both Arsenal and Manchester City Football Clubs. They investigate the reaction of fans to stadium moves by both clubs and the alienation these supporters have experienced. Penny and Redhead (2009), investigating Manchester City, highlighting several interesting issues relating to the British football stadium and a sense of place. Fans were found to experience alienation due to the "placeless environment" contained within the new Etihad Arena, particularly as their traditional forms of fan behavior were outlawed by new rules. Fans found themselves to be contained into one area of the stadium unlike the old Maine Road where fans could congregate as they pleased. Penny S [3] found that fans reacted to this placeless environment by forming supporters' groups in order to try and bring the old to the new, to bring about the same sense of place they felt at the old Maine Road. This shows the power that fans have when they collectively form to try to reduce their own alienation; of course, the power of collective fans is insignificant compared that of those who own the club or sponsor the team. Church A [13] focus on the building of new stadiums as a means of meeting new health and safety regulations, following the Taylor Report, and as a means of increasing revenue generation. Church

A [13] find moving to new stadiums has drastic implications for the power relationships that exist between fans and the stadium owners. Arguing that materialistic and spatial environments are used by both owners, to generate more economic wealth and control crowd behavior; and fans, to resist the power imposed on them by owners in the form of new practices. Both articles show a great resistance from fans opposing the move to a new stadium as being for the good of the owners not the fans. It is, therefore, clear that the sporting stadia must exist in a geographical location capable of taking on great meaning and significance to football supporters. Fans view these stadia as areas whereby identity can be formed, power resisted, and traditions of community and club upheld. The relocation of football clubs from inner-city locations to out-of-town sports complexes results in alienation of the supporters and the local community surrounding the club. This alienation is a result of the commodification of football and the desire of football club / stadium owners, TV companies and sponsors to meet new regulations, promote economic development, and maximize revenue generated.

### **Alienation of football supporters**

Marx theorized that within the capitalist mode of production the human being becomes estranged from his/her natural essence due to a distancing of social classes. The distancing of economic, social, and political power occurs because the bourgeoisie own the means of production and use their resources to extract surplus value, in the form of unpaid labour hours, from the proletariat, the laboring class. This results in the laborer's losing the ability to think for themselves, direct their own actions, define their relationships with others and own the value created via their labour. Marx argued that through this estrangement the laborer becomes alienated in four ways: from the products produced: the laborer no longer determines what products to produce, this is determined by the bourgeoisie. The act of labour changes from a natural activity whereby products are created with use-value to society, to one in which products are created with exchange-value for the consumer. The act of producing: labour consists of a series of repetitive actions that provide the worker with no satisfaction. The worker must sell his/her labour-power in order to survive and in this case, labour becomes compulsory not desired. From their true nature: naturally human beings have a desire to engage in activities that contribute to the improvement of human survival and quality of life. Through capitalism people are unable to satisfy this most natural of desires by creating products that they themselves imagine and then create. They inevitably create products which are designed to maximize surplus value for the bourgeoisie. From other workers: capitalism results in the transformation of labour being an activity conducted for the betterment of society into a simple commodity that can be assigned an exchange-value. Capitalism results in the creation of a competitive labour market whereby workers are forced to labour for the lowest possible rate in competition with other workers.

Thus, labour becomes an activity used to create more and more surplus value for the ruling class rather than an activity conducted to achieve the wants and desires of all people.

Dubal S [14] finds the commercialization of football is nothing new; as far back as the 1880s, English clubs illegally paid their players whilst the game was still played on a strictly amateur basis. Dubal S [14] theorizes that the difference between previous periods of commercialization and that of the late 20th to early 21st-century has been the impact upon football fans. As the hyper-commercialization of football has taken place, an ever-greater number of consumers have rushed to purchase the commodity of football. Dubal S [14] states that these new fans place a different meaning upon fandom, resulting in clashes with traditional supporters who try to renegotiate the power relations and meanings they attach to their beloved clubs. Malcolm D [15] analyzed the commodification of English Football from a stakeholder perspective, identifying the key participants and their sources of power within his "football figuration". In recent years the balance of power between the participants has changed dramatically as clubs have shifted from having community stakeholders to attaining public limited company (PLC) status thus shifting the balance of power away from fans and towards the various television companies, shareholders of the clubs, and sponsors who seek to commodify football for profit. Malcolm D [15] proposes a figuration whereby club owners with substantial wealth make many critical decisions, in addition to media companies with substantial financial power. The (FA) has some power given its historical significance but nowhere near that of the owners or media companies. The players enjoy social status and may act collectively through membership of the professional footballers' association. Malcolm D [15] describes fans as being alienated, an amorphous group with the least power of any. Kennedy P [6] offer a Marxist critique of European football, proposing that Marx's theory of surplus-value is the key to understanding the commodification of football. The authors identify several instances where clubs and governing bodies have attempted to impose business logic upon fans, to bring about a change in the way fans identify with football. [12] writes that alienation results as fans witness their own transition from supporters to consumers. Once key stakeholders and participants within the club, fans now become faceless customers; clubs care not for their cheering unquestionable support but for the monetary payment of an admission fee. This is Marxist alienation in the sense that fans are alienated from their own true nature; they become unable to express their own desire to support their team in a manner which has been the norm for more than 100 years. Their ability to participate in a club, which they at times have almost singlehandedly financed, is ripped away by the destructive forces of capitalism. A new force now dictates to fans the way in which they must support the team, not through the historically cherished loyalty, but through cash payments. Traditional fandom, once so important, now becomes meaningless in the face of a new

breed of supporters. Willing to pay higher prices for corporate seats, and even private boxes, the capitalist forces of football desire their money over the loyalty of traditional fans as surplus-value creation becomes the goal for football clubs. The traditional working-class fan is swept up in mass consumerism, cash nexus takes hold as the decades of support become meaningless to clubs; the lifelong supporter and the "prawn sandwich brigade", as dubbed by Roy Keane, become one and the same. They both provide the clubs with the only input desired, money.

### **Alienation from a sense of place**

Football fans are clearly alienated from clubs in many ways, too many to discuss exhaustively in this report. The specific form of alienation examined here is one proposed by Penny & Redhead [3]. Through investigation of Manchester City's move to the new Etihad Arena, the authors discovered that fans lost the sense of place they had established through many years of attending the club's original home, Maine Road. Hirst P [7] found that different geographical spaces, under different social and political conditions, are constructed by sources of conflict and political/social power. Hirst concludes that physical spaces are resources of power and meaning, although the relationship between power and space is complex. Fans experience identity formation within the football stadium, this identity is torn away from them when clubs relocate to new stadiums. Clubs and governing bodies argue that these moves are necessary to maintain health and safety regulations; this is true - however authors such as Penny S [3], argue that these moves represent further capitalization of football. Clubs are taken out of their spiritual homes and relocated to gentrified stadiums for the purpose of increasing the number of seats available for sale. Lawrence states that football fans place a significance upon grounds not unlike the religious significance placed upon a church. All three articles agree that sport, particularly football, is hugely important in the construction and reproduction of individual identities in a modern society. The use of physical stadia in the creation of identities, power relationships, and meanings shows just how precious stadiums are in the average supporter's way of life. Bairner A [11] state that traditional football stadiums in Northern Ireland are also used in the creation of identities and traditions, of both club and community. The authors find that Windsor Park (the home ground of Linfield FC) provides the physical space for an imagined Ulster amongst young working-class men, in a sense, a way for these men to live out a fantasy of a political and social ideal that many in Northern Ireland desire. Given the current political situation in Northern Ireland (NI), and current climate of inclusion and political correctness, a purely Protestant / Loyalist (NI) is impossible. Supporters of Linfield FC find Windsor Park to be a utopia, whereby they can, for a few brief hours each week, live within the imagined political dynamic which they desire.

The significance placed upon football stadiums by supporters has unfortunately, exposed them to further alienation in a Marxist

sense. The commercialization of football, according to [16], has resulted in football undergoing a process not unlike the industrial revolution. As clubs generate more and more financial wealth the desire to maximize surplus value has resulted in the construction of new stadia throughout the country. [16] along with authors [3], finds that football clubs use new stadiums as a tool to generate new sponsorship, such as the naming of the Emirates Stadium which resulted in millions of pounds in advertising rights from Emirates Airlines. Advertising is rife within the stadiums themselves, according to [16], as fans are bombarded with merchandise and betting establishments whereby clubs can benefit from their consumption. Fans who previously formed a sea of people within stadiums, choosing to stand in the same areas, with the same people, each week now find themselves confined to a specific seat. Again, they become unable to express themselves as supporters as new rules have banned traditions such as standing, singing, and cheering on their side. finds fans become alienated due to these new stadiums, not only from the club but from the physical stadiums. Leaving behind the history, memories, and relationships created within the old hallowed grounds, supporters once again find themselves trying to renegotiate new meanings. Lifelong supporters become unidentifiable within the new sea of football consumers there to experience a Premier League game not necessarily to support the team. Again, the destructive forces of capitalism dominate and destroy the communal ties of the past. The desire for clubs to maximize surplus value has led to the destruction of traditional grounds in pursuit of even greater profit. This process is not unlike the beginning of the industrial revolution, as Marx theorized, when people were torn away from their homes and motley feudal ties and shifted to inner-city areas, with no history or meaning to the people, and all done so that the bourgeoisie, in this case those who own the stadiums, can benefit from fans' consumerism and the destruction of the old way of life.

### Anti-neoliberalism

In Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto of 1848, he theorized that societies develop through periods of class struggle. In the case of capitalism, a widening of the gap between the social and economic power available to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie will occur [17]. This struggle between the two classes results in conflict; the proletariat will undergo a process whereby they develop class consciousness leading to unionist protest and activism from the proletariat as they seek to restore the more natural ways of life by overthrowing capitalism and progressing towards a new political theory called socialism [17]. Argued that alienation experienced by the proletariat within Marx's four-fold theory of alienation will lead to this revolution.

Webber (2017) found that, during the period 2000-2014, the popularity of English football steadily increased worldwide; however, he identified a growing discontent amongst many supporters in relation to the corporate greed and commercialization that had then come to dominate the game.

Webber proposes that the creation of an anti-neoliberal movement called Against Modern Football (AMF) is a result of this process. Under this banner, fans of many rival clubs have come together in protest at the new capitalist agenda being played out within football. This could potentially represent the kind of revolutionary response that Marx predicted from alienated stakeholders in the face of extreme capitalism. Harvey defines neoliberalism as a global doctrine capable of enacting hegemonic structural change within society. Originally, neoliberalism took the form of a political theory but, due to a shifting of social responsibility from the state to the citizen and private corporations, it has transformed into a mode of governance. Harvey (2005) suggests that, having been proposed in order to curb periods of recession by increasing private ownership of assets, neoliberalism has expanded greatly and is beginning to reshape the values and meanings within many aspects of life, including sport. [14] attempted to form an understanding of neoliberalism within football by examining fans' reactions to the new free-market-driven governance. In Brazil and England, [14] found rising ticket prices resulted in many fans becoming unable to attend matches. Kennedy P [6] point to examples of fans mounting counter ideological responses to the neo-liberalization of football such as the Twenty's Plenty campaign, which attempted to place a cap on the maximum price of a match-day ticket. It seems reasonable to suggest that Marx's proposed revolution against the capitalist forces by the proletariat may in fact be playing out in front of our eyes. As fans have become increasingly alienated from football clubs, stadiums, and players, there is a new desire to unwind some of the capitalistic changes and return to the communal ways of football in the past. However, whether the force behind this revolution will ever be strong enough to impact the modern game in any substantial way remains to be seen. If Marx was correct, the resistance amongst fans in recent years could potentially signal the beginning of the end for modern football as we have come to know it.

### Fan resistance

Supporters from all levels of football are beginning to resist the commodification of their culture and their club loyalty. This is seen in the form of increased ticket prices, overpaid players, soulless stadiums, set up out-with their historical communities, and the redesign of stadium interior and fan conduct leading to a loss of match-day atmosphere. Such commodification, supporters feel, is a main driver behind their sense of alienation from their own history, traditions, and clubs [18]. With the media's investment in football solidifying the industry theme of profit-maximization, traditional supporters are beginning to feel pushed aside. This is in order to prioritize a mass of customers that clubs can now attract from other cities and from abroad in the 'tourist-culture' that has seized football and driven up prices. This has now led to English football supporters putting aside club rivalries and banding together in their common interests [18]. This is obvious in the Against Modern Football movement, a subculture created by fans that stand against the commercial direction the industry

has moved in and want to see traditional supporters as more of a priority in clubs' eyes. Though Against Modern Football has been an effective cause, it is still a movement and not an official organization meaning it can be a little fluid, but it does have a set of core values which it follows such as: the importance of supporter engagement in order to make fans feel more connected with their clubs; the issue of increased ticket prices, alienating those who can no longer afford to attend; the need for governance reform; and the campaign to bring safe standing zones back into stadiums to create an atmosphere which, has been lost in their redesign [19]. This set of values created by the movement has evolved to be the belief of many official organizations. The Football Supporters Federation, for example, was founded in 2002 to represent the interests of English and Welsh football supporters and to campaign about the issues previously discussed. One notable campaign of theirs is the Twenty's Plenty for Away Tickets. This is a supporter call on football clubs at all levels to get together and agree an across-the-board price-cap of £20 on away tickets. This campaign stemmed from the understanding that, for a lot of supporters, football simply wasn't affordable anymore. This is especially true for away fans, which, aside from match tickets, still need to contend with increasing food, drink, and travel costs (fsf.org.uk, n.d). Through activism, though, like the weekend of action protests, where supporters' groups from every club in the top-flight, and many from the Football League, gathered to protest ticket prices (fsf.org.uk, n.d), and through lobbying and petitions, the Twenty's Plenty campaign has managed to save 68,000 fans a total of £738,000 (fsf.org.uk, n.d). Their crowning achievement was when the Premier League clubs agree to a £30 price-cap on away tickets at the beginning of the 2016/17 season which was then extended for another three seasons. But the FSA still claims that a lot more needs to be done to reduce ticket prices and to subsidize fans' travel costs (fsf.org.uk, n.d).

As well as the weekend of action protests, fans are taking to the streets more and more. A good example of this is the Fulham '#stopthegreed' campaign where fans protested outside their home, Craven Cottage, against ticket prices. This was spurred on as Fulham has some of the highest ticket prices in the Premier League which, according to a recent survey by the Fulham Supporters Trust, has led to 64% saying they go to fewer home games as a result (fsf.org.uk, n.d). As well as this, during a match with Sunderland, supporters' groups of Liverpool FC organized a walk out on the 77th minute in protest high ticket prices. It is estimated that over 10,000 people participated in this protest, highlighting the growth of the movement (Press Association, 2016). One final example would be the supporters' march on the Premier League headquarters in the summer of 2014. This was the second consecutive march of two summers and materialized after a Freedom of Information Act request revealed attendance for Arsenal FC's Emirates stadium was down 10%, leaving 170,000 seats empty over the course of the season. This only led to a greater feeling of resentment and alienation amongst supporters

as, though they could no longer afford match tickets, they had to witness them remaining unsold anyway. This march is a good example of the growing resistance from traditional supporters as it wasn't supporters of a sole club, but of many clubs, putting their club rivalries aside and banding together to protest everything football is becoming: its commodification, commercialization, and its leaving them behind.

### Corporate social responsibility

While success on the football field is always going to be paramount for football clubs, it is widely regarded that most clubs still have a strong obligation to serve their fan bases and community [20]. In the 1990s, football's increased commodification accelerated as a result of the floatation of clubs on the stock market and the increasing importance of the game for non-public sector media expansion (Hamil, Michie, Oughton, & Warby). This, as Smith argues, brought unprecedented wealth into the industry and began the gradual widening of the financial divide between football's elite and medium- to smaller-sized clubs. This inequality has resulted in a disparity of resources with the top-tier elites having access to vastly more funding and resources than the medium to smaller clubs. As an example, the net assets for Arsenal Holdings Plc rose from £159,100,000 to £419,916,000 in the ten years from 2008 to 2018. In that same period, the Scottish Premier League's Ross County Football Club Ltd saw a reduction in their net assets from £3,034,951 to £624,372. The success seen by football's elite clubs is, unsurprisingly, accompanied by an increase in media and political attention which, in turn, saw Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) steadily move its way up the agenda. Groups like the Football Association (FA) have teamed up with individual clubs to tackle such problems as the financial divide between clubs and poor treatment of supporters as stakeholders. The FA has a strong belief in football's unique place in British society and its ability to act as a power for good off the pitch (The FA, 2005). With social and community responsibility more important today than it ever has been, it's vital that professional clubs in England have the same vision as the FA in this case in order to protect their image and brand identity James & Guo [20].

As highlighted in this report, the commodification which has, admittedly, led to great success for some clubs, has also led to the feeling of alienation amongst their supporters, or 'customers' as they're more often seen. Arguably, one way in which clubs can reduce this alienation is by allowing fans to see a proportion of their surplus-value distributed into communities through CSR projects. A good example of this is at Arsenal FC. On the one hand, commodification has left a feeling of alienation amongst the supporters, but, on the other, the club has put an array of CSR projects in motion to reduce this. Firstly, and a good example of community involvement, is the Arsenal Double Club, a programmed led by Arsenal London Club and Arsenal Stadium, providing after-school, holiday, and school-time classes for improving children's literacy and numeracy. As well as this, since

1985, the club has had an 'Arsenal in the community' department which delivers sport, social, and educational programmes to over 5,000 young people (Breithbarth & Harris). Marx [21] makes consistent references to the capitalists "boundless drive for enrichment" and sole focus on profit-maximization: "Use-values must therefore never be treated as the immediate aim for the capitalist; nor must the profit on any single transaction. His [Their] is rather the unceasing movement of profit-making" [21] "Capital has one sole driving force, the drive to valorize itself, to create surplus-value, to absorb the greatest amount of surplus labour" (p. 342), "The self-valorization of capital the creation of surplus-value is therefore the determining, dominating and overriding purpose of the capitalist; it is the absolute motive and content of his activity" (p. 990). With this in mind, CSR, and business ethics as a whole, could be rejected by Marxists on two grounds: one, it is an impossibility due to capitalism's nature of producing greedy, overreaching, and unethical business behavior with a sole view on profit maximization; and, two, it's simply irrelevant as focusing on a business's ethical or unethical behavior will distract one's attention from the systematic vices of capitalism (Shaw, 2009). So, it would be naïve to assume club's social efforts are motivated through shareholders' moral conscience. More likely, they are still stemming from the idea of profit maximization. Shaw (2009) argued that, in today's era, consumer groups are quick to respond to corporate behavior they perceive to be "harmful, unethical or irresponsible" and the vast majority of companies wish to be portrayed as good, socially responsible, and positive contributors to local communities. Therefore, it's in a company's self-interest to at least appear socially responsible and not single-mindedly bent on profit maximization. Thus, it may be profitable, in the long run, to act in ways which aren't immediately profitable, but further a company's image of social conscience.

Fans have used a basic stakeholder strategy to implement their concerns by creating public pressure through mass media (Beckmann et al., 2006) and have effectively reduced their own alienation by coercing clubs into being more socially responsible. From a Marxist perspective, it may be an ineffective tactic. As proclaimed in Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology*, "not criticism but revolution is the driving force behind history". This may be true. CSR projects by clubs are far from being radical and do not outstrip the alienating effects of their commodification. It's still fair to say, though, that, for today's business-centric football clubs, CSR is a useful tool. This is for two reasons: as clubs operate in a globalized environment and attempt to pull fans from farther afield, the methods of which can leave local fans alienated, CSR can be used to re-establish faith that the clubs have not forgotten their historic links to the areas or their original fans. And, for fans who are not historically or locally tied to the club, but are brought in as potential new business to further the club's success, CSR, as a selling point, will only help, and can be a win-win situation for both clubs and fans.

### Case Study 1: Wimbledon AFC

The first and key case study in the analysis of Marxist theory in the English game is the case of Wimbledon AFC and the vast extent of alienation of their support as the club's hierarchy elected to relocate geographically on a scale which was unprecedented in football. In 2003, Wimbledon FC's relocation to Milton Keynes was approved by the Football Association (FA). It is widely regarded as the most disputed decision in the modern game, instigating extensive detachment amongst Wimbledon FC supporters, as their cherished, community driven club was transformed into a modern-day football franchise [16]. Formed in 1889, and playing at the instantly recognizable Plough Lane, Wimbledon enjoyed reasonable periods of success in the latter years of their history. Their remarkable surge from the fourth division to the first division in just four years was nearly as impressive as their prominent victory over Liverpool in the 1988 FA Cup Final [22]. Despite the on-field success, Wimbledon accumulated various difficulties away from the football pitch. The club was producing attendances as low as 8,000 and, after the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, the Taylor Report highlighted that Plough Lane failed the newly implemented safety regulations, therefore, leaving Wimbledon without a stadium until major upgrades were completed. Consequently, the club began sharing a stadium with Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park. It can be viewed as a great success as, on average, attendances were double to what they had been achieving at Plough Lane. Yet, the club was in substantial financial difficulties which were exacerbated when they were relegated at the turn of the century. Charles Koppel was appointed chairman of the club in 2001, with his main objective being to find a stadium for the struggling club [22]. As these events with Wimbledon were unfolding, a consortium led by Peter Winkelman was on the search to relocate an already established football club to Milton Keynes. Wimbledon was viewed as the consortium's main target, despite the locations being 70 miles apart. Milton Keynes lacked a distinct football team; however, Winkelman was far less concerned about this but had a great interest in the fact that the town didn't have an Asda supermarket and how football stadiums were extremely beneficial in order to receive planning permission for supermarkets [22]. This relates to Marx's alienation theory, as Winkelman's plans rejected implicitly all the core values of what Wimbledon was as a club. In fact, a community-based football club was about to become a bargaining chip for the benefit of a supermarket franchise. Koppel claimed to have requested to every council within a 25-mile radius for planning permission to build a stadium and was denied by all of them. However, just three months later, he accepted an offer from Winkelman's consortium to move the club to Milton Keynes. The general feeling amongst Wimbledon supporters was about Koppel's callousness by moving the club 70 miles away from their home and his indolence at not attempting to make a deal with local councils for planning permission. Peter, a former member of Wimbledon Independent Supporters' Association (WISA), states "Koppel signed a contract

with the MKSC committing the club to seek permission to move, once he had done that, attempts to find alternatives were all done with a view to demonstrating that it was impossible. The idea of staying at Selhurst Park was ruled out because the current lease was expiring, but no consideration went towards renewing it" [22]. Winkelman's consortium and Koppel's counterarguments included that due to Wimbledon's recent relegation and their mounting financial difficulties, it was extremely unfeasible to build a new stadium in the London borough of Merton (Wimbledon). Granted, the club was producing operating losses of £10 million in 2001; however, its financial problems were not as ominous as once suggested. The club had recently sold several players for around the price of £5 million, resulting in Wimbledon fans questioning why a decrease in playing staffs' wages wasn't discussed. This further reiterates the feeling of alienation among supporters; staff members were more concerned about retaining their full salaries rather than sacrificing a percentage to assist the club find a stadium solution that would have been overwhelmingly appreciated by the supporters.

A significant incident in these events was known as "Koppelgate" by Wimbledon supporters. By January 2002, many fans believed that Koppel was actively against the idea of Wimbledon returning to Merton and was interfering with any chance of it materializing. With Wimbledon's original request to move to Milton Keynes being rejected by the Football League in 2001, the case was appealed by Koppel and it was agreed by both parties that the result of the appeal would be legally binding. Koppel and Dan Trench, an employee of his public relations team, met with residents in Merton who opposed the building of a new stadium at Plough Lane. Several recordings verify that Koppel and Trench harassed residents for witness statements to enhance the case against building a stadium in Merton. Quotations from Koppel and Trench included: "Please sound reasonable in your statement, so that fans can forget the idea of the Plough Lane site" and how WISA associates need to "get it through their thick heads" that a move to Plough Lane is not feasible [22]. Plough Lane was the essence of Wimbledon, and it was being disregarded by the club's hierarchy, those who should be dedicated to saving their club's culture. The club's supporters were being mocked and insulted by their club's owners, which further conveys the extensive apathy and lack of respect Koppel and Trench displayed towards the club. In May 2002, the three-man commission ruled 2-1 in favour of permitting Wimbledon FC to relocate to Milton Keynes. The commission stated that they strongly opposed franchising becoming normality in football, but they believed Wimbledon FC's situation was particularly exclusive. The commission's decision was strongly influenced by the fact that Wimbledon had been without a home stadium for over ten years, resulting in losses of £4 million per annum for every year they shared stadiums with Crystal Palace. They believed that this factor, combined with the club's recent relegation from the Premier League, would have resulted in the liquidation of the football club; therefore,

repositioning to Milton Keynes was the only feasible option to rescue the club from collapsing [23].

Since their club had been stolen from them, within a month of the commission's verdict, members of WISA and The Dons Trust initiated a new club named AFC Wimbledon. At the start of the concluding season in Wimbledon FC's grand 115-year history, attendances were as low as 700 dues to the extensive boycotting campaign by the club's supporters. Feeling aghast, dejected, and isolated, holders of Wimbledon FC's season tickets cancelled their reserved seats in abundance. Meanwhile, support for a club that remained loyal to its heritage grew with profuse support, AFC Wimbledon [16]. At present, AFC Wimbledon has risen from the ninth tier of English football to League One, currently in the same division as MK Dons. Most AFC Wimbledon supporters feel substantial gratification that their club legitimately worked their way through the Football Leagues (contrasting to MK Dons, which was gifted a league position) and are competitive with the club that was responsible for the theft of their identity and culture [24]. Additionally, AFC Wimbledon is expected to move into New Plough Lane after its completion in 2020/21. Therefore, relating back to Koppelgate, if planning permission has now been granted in Merton, could Koppel and his staffs have achieved an agreement if they had had a greater degree of respect towards the history of the club and its supporters? The honors won by Wimbledon FC were disputed for four years after the commission's approval of the relocation in May 2002. AFC Wimbledon supporters believed that they were keeping the identity of Wimbledon FC alive, and it was only fair that the honors remained in the community where they were once celebrated and still cherished to this day. Winkelman strongly opposed this claim and stated that AFC Wimbledon supporters were traitors of Wimbledon FC and that MK Dons were the real holders of their history. He also rejected the idea that AFC Wimbledon deserved any replicas of Wimbledon FC's honors. Despite this, AFC Wimbledon and MK Dons officials agreed to negotiations with the Football Supporters Federation (FSF) in July 2006, and it was settled by both parties that MK Dons would renounce any claim to Wimbledon FC's honors and that all trophy replicas would belong to the London Borough of Merton (Potter, 2018).

In conclusion, a community that was subjected to spite and detachment from its football club's hierarchy overcame these barriers. It rejuvenated its spiritual hub and deservedly earned the right to Wimbledon FC's honors as well as now gaining the advantage over the franchise that caused it so much pain. The case of Wimbledon's relocation to Milton Keynes demonstrates that if a group is stripped of its culture, amazing levels of strength and determination can be expected to fuel its inevitable resurgence.

### Case Study 2: Manchester United FC

The second case study will analyze Manchester United supporters' plight against the commercialized machine which is now United and how Marxism is applied in the sense of the

working-class man fighting against a corrupt capitalist hierarchy. Founded in 1878 as Newton Heath LYR Football Club, Manchester United is England's most successful football club with 68 trophies. In 1902, Newton Heath found itself in debt and was saved by a local businessman John Davies, who in turn changed its name to Manchester United and eight years later moved the club to a new stadium called Old Trafford. In 1991, United was floated on the stock market and was subject to a takeover bid from Rupert Murdoch which was accepted but blocked by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Its on-field success has resulted in off-field success manifesting in record revenues of £627,122 in 2019. More recently, however, United has not repeated its past successes yet it is still one of the few English clubs making a profit. Until the early-2000s, the United fans were more than content with their progress, having recently won the treble - Premier League, FA Cup, and Champion's League. Malcolm Glazer took around a 15% stake of United in late [25], and, by the end of 2004, he owned much more than the 30% threshold required to force a takeover bid. By May 2005, he had 98% ownership of the club. The final purchase price of United came to around £800 million [26]. The Glazers gained control of United by literally using the club as the liability. The United Supporters Trust was aghast, stating that "the fans will effectively be paying for someone to borrow money to own their club". United, which was debt-free for so many years had, overnight, become riddled with debt. Prior to the Glazers, United was a very well-run club which regularly invested in the squad and stadium and was very rarely in debt. The fact that the Glazers' takeover required immense levels of borrowing, and then placed that debt onto the club, really angered match-going fans, most of whom began to protest. Alienated fans who felt that the heart of the club they had grown up with had been ripped away created a new club, FC United of Manchester. Even today, in 2020, United still has a massive debt and it has paid out over £750m in interest payments. However, it has only repaid £44m of the original debt [27]. At the current rate of repayment, it will take United 158 years to finally repay the loan and be debt-free.

The Glazers expanded Old Trafford's capacity in the 2005-06 season, and they oversaw United winning three leagues in a row, and the Champions League. However, in 2009 they sold the world's best player, Cristiano Ronaldo, to Real Madrid, and didn't properly replace him. This resulted in more fan backlash than ever before; a movement called Love United Hate Glazer encouraged match-going fans to wear green and gold, the colors of Newton Heath. Those disgruntled fans attempted to take over the club in 2010 but didn't meet the valuation of the club [28]. The Glazers' apparent disinterest in the club, the football, and the culture caused even more fans to feel alienated. The club would host worldwide watch-along events in countries like China, India, United States and Singapore, yet wouldn't provide ones for poorer fans in Manchester whom the club ought to serve. This sort of globalism, of the worst kind, is one of the reasons the fans of United have been, and still are, vocally dissatisfied with the

Glazer ownership. Some fans attend away matches but will attend Salford City or FC United's home matches as a coping mechanism. Some rioted outside Old Trafford, clashing with police, trying to oust the Glazers. The police would batter the fans with batons and set dogs upon them. These fans were just trying to fight against the power of sports globalists who had the maximum backing from the state; their defeat was the last straw for many of them. It was the hardest-core supporters which in mainland Europe would be termed 'ultras' that decided to take action. Mostly all were from Manchester and approximately aged between 20 and 50. "They 'congregate' around particular organizations - the three long-established United fanzines (Red Issue, United We Stand and Red News); the Independent Manchester United Supporters Association (IMUSA); and small shareholders' organization, Shareholders United (SU)" (Brown, 2007). Manchester City fans would often portray themselves as 'fans', whereas United had 'customers' and not 'fans. This was perhaps the seed being sown for these fans, who would attempt to combat these accusations of not being 'true fans. When a massive globalist came in and bought the club, turning its history and traditions into a simple commodity, they all but saw it as confirming those City-fan accusations of being sell-outs. They also started turning on each other; if some fans weren't perceived to be as hardcore anti-Glazer as they were, or even if they attended games, they would be verbally abused. According to Karl Marx, the capital mode of production alienates the worker from the products being produced, the act of producing and his/her species-being or true nature [20] which directly applies in this case study. Hyper-capitalism, which has been bred within United by the Glazers, has caused United fans to question the true nature of the club and the hierarchy controlling it therefore alienating supporters, to the extent of exile, with capitalism poisoning the club at its heart.

### Case Study 3: Manchester City FC

The third case study analyzed in this piece will be of Manchester United's city rivals Manchester City focusing on the alienation factors which arise during the transition from a spiritual home to a new modernized 'placeless' stadium structure, in this case, the Etihad Stadium in 2006. Again, it is the view that City tried to really create sporting tophilia within the new stadium spaces and heavily relied on fans to refigure and renegotiate to come to compromises [3]. The major worry for a club relocating is that fans don't connect to the new structure with the authenticity threatened as they transition to a 'placeless' stadium which possesses fewer tangible landscape elements which a passionate spectator can relate to [3]. The new stadiums, which have the feeling of dictated and standardized values, are venues which will be a hard pill to swallow for your die-hard supporters. Uniformity of stadium redevelopments in the past 20 years has been apparent with major clubs going for more homogenized standardized stadium landscapes to merge with city skylines (Bale, 2000) [29]. These structures are perceived to have a real lack of identity as a result leaving fans remembering the good

times in smaller, simpler locations [29]. A traditional football stadium such as Maine Road is a historical social space in society and within the city of Manchester itself - it gave many individuals a place where they felt like they belonged and where they could be among people of their own [3]. Socially, it was the meeting point for many of the working-class to connect with people that they wouldn't otherwise be able to see during the week. This is still the case today for many traditionalist supporters who haven't exactly been able to accelerate their own understanding of technology compared to the pace the world is changing in that regard. With Manchester City fans being heavily priced out of the match-day experience with the ticket surplus-value being exponentially rising, since the stadium relocation in 2006, many traditionalist fans have been lost in the transition and left behind with Maine Road. Instead, they have been replaced with tourist supporters or even nothing with the maximum capacity of the Etihad difficult to fill in recent years.

Traditionally garnered through the experience of returning to the stadium over time, the embodied and social experiences encountered within the stadium, and the all-important sensory aspect to the stadium experience, an understanding of issues surrounding the development of the sporting tophilia or a sense of place within the traditional stadium is important when performing an analysis of the new stadiums built in the post-Taylor Report era (Penny & Redhead, 2009, p. 757). Relating back to the 'tradium' concept, clubs such as Manchester City have found it important to diversify the use of their home stadium in order to host other events - creating new cash flows. In 2008, in qualifying for the UEFA Cup, City had to play a home qualifier at Barnsley FC's Oakwell due to the fact the pitch was in unplayable condition after a Bon Jovi concert which took place in the off-season. Aspects such as these are especially frustrating for fans as clubs move into the new modernized era. City fans had created an atmosphere of dissatisfaction with supporter groups fragmented, divided, and atomized over the newly built environment before a ball was even kicked (Penny & Redhead, 2009). Maine Road was more ... personal. Obviously because it was the place, we all grew up with City. The stadium itself was a real mishmash of designs, but that's what gave it character. Blue watch Manchester City [3]. Newly built structures have a standardized feel to them and are becoming increasingly dehumanized and rationalized [3]. To soften the blow of leaving a spiritual home behind, many modern-day clubs try to incorporate old references into the new structure in an attempt to bring fans around to the venture. With a new stadium such as the Etihad having no identity or history, it was pivotal to appease fan activist groups such as the Bluewatch and solve the alienation complex by incorporating classic Manchester City visual cues and trademarks into the Etihad. A prime example of this is the recent unveiling of the Vincent Kompany statue outside of the Etihad, a dedication to a player who is the epitome of the memories the Etihad has garnered since its opening and the new memories which have been created during City's recent

success in the top-tier. It is these new memories which are the key in building character within a 'placeless' structure such as the Etihad Stadium and encouraging supporters to begin to look forward to the future instead of looking back at traditions of old. However, no matter the success a club may have, alienation of supporter communities in Manchester will always be present with both city clubs becoming dissimilar to how traditionalist supporters have always visualized them. Historical moments of the past are celebrated by fans and these traditions are what are all important to these alienated communities [20].

As purpose-built stadiums are a rising trend as we move into the future, fan communities concerned about the maintenance of their clubs' identity through transition will grow across the world and generally become more prevalent in football fan culture [3]. Applying Marxist theory, Manchester City be a prime example of how hierarchical greed and capitalism have consumed a football club to the point where traditional supporters don't identify with the brand any longer. Despite increased on-field competitiveness, marquee signings every transfer window, and a state-of-the-art modernized stadium structure, these aspects are only absolute positives from a business standpoint. Capitalism can be a natural killer for atmosphere as real Manchester City fans fail to identify with the club and take their business away after feeling alienated during the club morphing to a commercialist monster. No other club in English Football League history has arguably undergone such a dramatic restructure in the last fifteen years as Manchester City. Sparked by the move away from Maine Road to the City of Manchester Stadium, and the Sheikh Mansour takeover in 2008, the embodiment of capitalism (Sheik Mansour himself) has entered the club's structure and rotted the traditional identity which was beloved to the core. Unfortunately, with Manchester City's business model, it seems as though the commodification and commercialization of the match-day experience will only continue to increase, leaving next to no chance of the working-class City supporter returning to the stands on a regular basis anytime soon [30-43].

### Personal Reflections & Final Conclusion

In conclusion and reflecting on the discussion, Marx's theory of alienation is portrayed perfectly in the rise of capitalism in English football. The beautiful game has suffered in this evolution with capitalism corrupting football to an extent no element has ever done previously. Commercialization has rotted the identity of huge clubs such as Manchester United and Manchester City to the core, creating alienation amongst supporter communities as the clubs' hierarchies move to create specified brands rather than consolidate traditional football clubs. Capitalism in the EPL has only created an ever-growing greed which has been nothing but destructive to the true meaning of what it is to support these EPL teams. Football club hierarchies have relocated geographically to purpose-built stadiums, raised ticket prices to unaffordable levels, and rebranded their football clubs in ways in which communities

have been left divided as their beloved football clubs have become well-oiled cash cows before anything else. Marx's theories of alienation is widely relevant to the case of English Premier League's capitalist revolution, with the traditionalist supporters being made an outcast by the club within due to surplus-value ticket prices and the true identity of the club being ripped apart in pursuit of greater cash flows.

It is important that, in the future, these clubs work to rectify the alienation of their supporter communities and look to harness their overwhelming ambition for optimal cash flows. Of course, football clubs are businesses before anything else and sustainability is vital; however, there is an element of overabundant greed that exists. True working-class fans are being priced out of tickets; top clubs are relocating geographically to new communities, which have no correlation to their traditionalist roots; and boundaries are being moved which should never be disturbed in order for the true identity of the clubs to be maintained. With commodification and commercialization exponentially growing year-on-year in the English game, and the match-day product becoming paramount to club hierarchies, the league is very much becoming a 'tourist league' where attendances are made up of spectators who have no emotional attachment and are merely there to consume a product rather than support a football club. This is while the working-class person who lives and breathes the football club sits at home on a Saturday afternoon, priced out by extortionate ticket prices and left feeling alienated by the transition that their football club has experienced in the past 30 years. Hopefully there is a revolutionary change in the business plans of EPL football clubs in the future which will see the return of traditionalist supporters to grounds around the country and alienated communities will begin to mesh as football tries to save itself from capitalism.

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