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Three-sided Football and the Alternative

Soccerscape:

A Study of Sporting Space, Play and Activism

Abstract:

Three teams, three goals, and one ball. Devised as an illustrative example of 'trialectics', Danish artist and philosopher Asger Jorn conceived of three-sided football in 1962. However, the game remained a purely abstract philosophical exercise until the early 1990s when a group of anarchists, architects and artists decided to play the game for the first time. Since these early experiments three-sided football has been played across the globe, from 'anarchist' football festivals in Germany, contemporary art installations in France, through to youth outreach programs in Colombia. Far beyond its emergent context, and as a codified and formalised sport, the game continues to resonate for a myriad of social actors in search of alternative ways to play and live in contemporary culture.

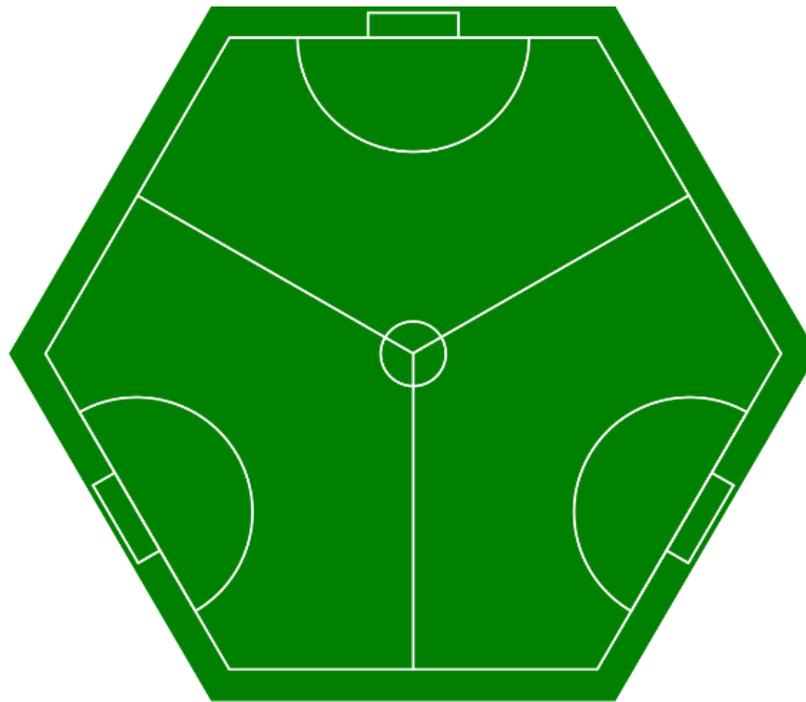
This thesis provides the first ethnography into three-sided football. In doing so, it privileges much needed player perspectives on how DIY initiatives are attempting to redefine football in response to the hyper commodification of the elite two-sided game. More broadly, this research is an exploration of how societal alternatives (sporting or otherwise) are imagined, produced, fragmented, and transformed as popular practices in the 'fully lived' space. Further, how such spaces are comprised of individual and collective social agencies which respond, and adapt to, pre-existing structures, inherited symbolic practices and received cultural logics.

Drawing from forty-four semi-structured interviews with players, coaches, curators and activists from across the social field, this research is situated within the recent contestations over the game's trajectory. This demonstrates the complex social dynamics and 'narrative horizons' at play as the three-sided football community has grappled with how best to foster inclusive, less competitive sporting spaces. Also, how the 'strategic appropriation' of the practice within pedagogical settings has offered a sustainable future for the game. In highlighting the heterotopic, dynamic and ontologically uncertain status of three-sided football, this thesis argues that the game offers participants multiple and competing forms of 'practical consciousness' through which to remake the world; be that as a 'desportized' form of football, as an absurd and playful spatial intervention, or as a form of community engagement.

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Three-sided Football and the Alternative Soccerscape:

A Study of Sporting Space, Play and Activism

Benjin Pollock

PhD Sociology 2020

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Despite my name appearing as the sole author of this project, in many ways PhD's are co-authored and collaborative. Therefore, respect due to all three sided footballers who were involved in this project. Without your reflections, generosity and time this project would be nothing. Further respect due to the University of Kent for fully funding this research. Also, to my supervisors David Nettleingham and Vince Miller who kept faith with the project in its more expansive and sprawling iterations! Lastly, maximum respect goes to Ambar Sethi who found me in the archives of the May Day Rooms and shared this journey with me. Onwards Comrades!

Abstract

Three teams, three goals, and one ball. Devised as an illustrative example of ‘trialectics’, Danish artist and philosopher Asger Jorn conceived of three-sided football in 1962. However, the game remained a purely abstract philosophical exercise until the early 1990s when a group of anarchists, architects and artists decided to play the game for the first time. Since these early experiments three-sided football has been played across the globe, from ‘anarchist’ football festivals in Germany, contemporary art installations in France, through to youth outreach programs in Colombia. Far beyond its emergent context, and as a codified and formalised sport, the game continues to resonate for a myriad of social actors in search of alternative ways to play and live in contemporary culture.

This thesis provides the first ethnography into three-sided football. In doing so, it privileges much needed player perspectives on how DIY initiatives are attempting to redefine football in response to the hyper commodification of the elite two-sided game. More broadly, this research is an exploration of how societal alternatives (sporting or otherwise) are imagined, produced, fragmented, and transformed as popular practices in the ‘fully lived’ space. Further, how such spaces are comprised of individual and collective social agencies which respond, and adapt to, pre-existing structures, inherited symbolic practices and received cultural logics.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 3SF | Three-Sided Football |
| AAA | Association of Autonomous Astronauts |
| ABRACADABRA | Alytus Biennial Reversion into Abolition of Culture and Distribution of its Aberrant Bacillus Right Abroad |
| CONIFA | Confederation of Independent Football Association |
| CON | Counter Olympics Network |
| DAMTP | DAta Miners & Travailleurs Psychique |
| EPL | English Premier League |
| F3C | Fútbol 3 Colombia |
| FIFA | Fédération Internationale de Football Association |
| IMID | International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus |
| LBDL | Luther Blissett Deptford League |
| LPA | London Psychogeographical Association |
| SI | Situationist International |
| SICV | Scandinavian Institute of Comparative Vandalism |
| UfSO | University of Strategic Optimism |
| UEFA | Union of European Football Associations |
| WNLA | Workshop for Non Linear Architecture |

Glossary of Tactics

The following glossary acts as a reference point for the reader in order to help outline or clarify a number of key concepts, tactics and phrases which are introduced and threaded throughout the following thesis. Whilst it is important to acknowledge that the meanings of many of these terms remain deliberately ambiguous and multiple, it is hoped that these practical definitions will also act as a tactical manual through which curious and 'excessive' readers will devise further triolectical football experiments.



Pataphysics

Pataphysics is a concept central to the recent history and absurd development of three-sided football. However, it is also one which eludes simplistic definition. Pataphysics can be described crudely as a parodic intellectual literary movement which dates back to the late 19th century. It is chiefly concerned with the creation of intellectual frameworks which can be used to parody and probe at the limits of scientific rationalism and metaphysical inquiry. First promoted by French writer Alfred Jarry, this quixotic and elusive term also relates to a 'philosophy' which seeks to utilise the supposedly benign and rigorous function of science to prove (and justify) absurdist positions. Also, to propose imaginary solutions beyond existing material objects and practices. By the middle of the 20th century a number of *Collège de Pataphysique* were set up across Europe through which such absurdist propositions could be developed, researched and disseminated. During this time Pataphysics also became a key part of the aesthetic tactics of Asger Jorn (the founder of three sided football) and the Situationist International, who both sought to destabilise the existing world order using humour, appropriation and myth making. In particular, Jorn developed his parodic concept of triolectics and 'situ-logic' in order to counter the existing theories of nuclear physics. In doing so he created three sided football. The ways in which the revived London Psychogeographical Association Newsletter also utilised extensive historical archives and scientific justifications within their texts and practices shows the importance of the concept to both the 20th century avant garde, 21st century creative activists, and also highlights the thin line between reality and illusion within the contemporary game.

The Absurd

Directly related to the notions of productive parody within Pataphysics, 'The Absurd' and 'Absurdism' are concepts utilised within this thesis to consider the radical ways in which three-sided players seek to counter 'serious' culture and the need for 'productive' outcomes in contemporary capitalist culture. In this respect, 'The Absurd' within three-sided football relates to what Albert Camus might term the 'leap of faith' needed for players to reach beyond outcome, meaning and seriousness and move towards more uncertain and wilfully unproductive sporting and political prospects. The use of the term Absurdism in my work also represents how the forms of critique and protest found within three-sided football are inextricably linked to the avant garde art movement of Dadaism which sought to counter bourgeois sensibilities and productive capitalist logics through irrational and nonsensical forms of anti-art. The wilful attempts by contemporary players to refuse meaning (and artistic appraisal) should be considered within such an 'anti-aesthetic' tradition. Equally, the radical emancipatory potential of Absurdism is found within the understanding that three-

sided football should be considered as a 'sport of the absurd'. This builds upon notions of the 'theatre of the absurd' as a tool through which the audience (and players/actors) are able to discover the alienation of their existence through formal experimentation and a deliberate lack of instrumentality or coherence.

Psychogeography

Dating back to the mid-1950s, Psychogeography is a practice inherently linked to the ways in which various avant garde movements sought to counter the alienating experiences of urban life and 'functional' town planning. Infuriatingly described by one of its early practitioners (Guy Debord) as 'charmingly vague', it is a creative practice most associated with the Situationist International. This group of writers, artists and philosophers (of which Jorn was also part for a time) developed direct strategies through which to play within the existing urban environment in unexpected and wilfully irrational ways. Central to their practice was Psychogeography 'drifting'; an activity which required an active disposition to move through urban spaces in innovative or unorthodox ways. These acts (so the theory goes) would lead to a radical re-awakening and form of critical consciousness about the ways in which humans are controlled and psychically policed within rationalised and segregated urban centres. In order to experience a liberation from these architectural, physical and psychic strictures it was important to 'drift' autonomously through cities and occupy space. Such psychogeographic drifts were called *derives* and included superimposing maps from one city on to another as a way to be freed from the logics and spaces of capitalism. The performative nature of psychogeography and its romantic allure has meant that it continues to be used within various artistic and literary contexts in contemporary culture. Of particular relevance to the recent history of three-sided football are the London Psychogeographical Association and the Workshop for Non Linear Architecture who were both active throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. These groups used the game as a pretext to drift through and occupy urban spaces across Europe.

Triolectics/Trialectics

The term Triolectics is used throughout the thesis. It encompasses a wide number of concepts with various origins and spellings. In its broadest sense, Triolectics is concerned with transcending and overcoming binary thought and practice. For Asger Jorn, Triolectics was a concept through which to develop his theory of 'complementarity'. This was one which attempted to challenge a dominant philosophy and logic of dialectical materialism and to present a three stranded alternative which would destabilise conceived understandings of rational logic, aesthetics, science and philosophy. Three-sided football is the practical way in which Jorn explains Triolectics as a neutralising scientific force. Despite its pataphysical tendencies, Jorns philosophy can also be closely linked to the dialectics of 'triplicity' proposed by Henri Lefebvre in his theoretical treatise on space. In this context 'trialectical' thinking allows us to consider how the lived experiences of space operate

within a relationship between lived, perceived and conceived spaces. It is also one which considers the radical political possibilities found within such lived spaces. Further developed by a number of spatial scholars and critical geographers (most notably Edward Soja in his concept of 'Third-Space') the introduction of wider triolectic analysis has allowed for a critical deconstruction of the binaries of subject and object, the abstract and the real, and the lived and imagined. The various three-sided concepts which inform this thesis each search for new paradigms to understand the world in time and space.

Ludus vs Paidia

Ludus and Paidia are two contrasting forms of play which remain central to understanding recent developments within the game of three sided football. In this context, Ludus can be defined as play which operates within tight restrictions, regulations and outcomes, whereas Paidia refers to spontaneous and unstructured play. These terms were initially developed by the French sociologist Roger Caillois in the late 1950s as he sought to place play and games on an analytical continuum. At one end were forms of restrictive, constraints-based, rule-bound forms of play, and on the other were more expressive, child-like, rebellious, and improvised iterations. This delineation encapsulated a wider contemporaneous trend which sought to understand how play had developed in modern culture as binary, competitive and outcome driven. Also, how various forms of play could at once be utilised in the service of revolutionary agendas and used to subdue the masses. The Situationist International (with Jorn) extolled the virtues of paidic play in order to counter the alienation of man from 'pure play' in capitalist culture. This alienation was found within the parcelized zones of 'ludic' play occurring in dedicated sports arenas and segregated leisure spaces in urban life. In order to achieve a 'revolution of everyday life' these alienated spaces needed to be countered with more rebellious and provocative expressions of playful freedom.

Détournement

In a broad sense to *détourn* means to appropriate the language, images, signs and symbols of capitalist culture and imbue them with radical political content. This can include defacing commercial products and overlaying texts over existing advertising to awaken the masses to their exploitation and indoctrination. Through *détournement* social actors are able to build a new world in the shell of the existing one, to gain agency and see the world anew. Drawn from its French origin, *détournement* can be translated as the act of rerouting and hijacking. Alongside psychogeography, it was another key tactic espoused by the Situationist International in their revolutionary program to overcome the totalising effect of post-war capitalist consumer culture. The act of *détournement* (later also known as culture jamming) was also a corner stone of DIY Punk aesthetics and anarchist activism but has since been adopted (and recuperated) into a number of counter revolutionary commercial advertising contexts.

The Excessive

The 'excessive' within this thesis takes on multiple meanings. It is adopted from Robert Fiske's understandings of the 'fan' as an 'excessive' reader of cultural texts; one who demonstrates a form of critical productive capacity in relation to their leisure pursuits. However, it is also a word which links us back to the intellectual milieu of the mid-20th century where there were attempts to understand how forms of revolutionary play and social action relied upon what Lefebvre termed the 'excessive' energies of the body in order to enact true transformational political change. In this sense, the 'excessive' player becomes one who seeks to reach beyond instrumentality and rational logic, and one that refuses the binary logics and capitalist structures of power (be that in sport or other cultural contexts). The excessive thus relates to the active appropriation of space, the transformation of social relations, and importantly the creation of 'situations' which attempt to disrupt existing norms, values and hierarchies.

Autonomia

The narratives which emerged during three-sided football's revival within the Italian anarcho activism of the 1990s has many links to the social movement known as *Autonomia Operaia* (or Autonomous Workers Movement). This term refers explicitly to the anti-authoritarian Marxist political collectives who emerged in Italy during the 1970s. These outlier groups sought to challenge the dogmatic and hierarchical nature of the Italian Communist Party, build independent social centres and stage self-organised wild cat strikes and occupations in the industrial centres of the country. Within the mid-1990s milieu, emergent activist groups further organised around these autonomous principles (notably *Ya Basta!* and *Tute Bianche*). In this context *neo-Autonomia* groups also included those within creative cultural and artistic contexts. Part of this revival movement was the Luther Blissett Project, who were a loose collective of activists who also utilised three-sided football as a form of humorous literary critique and direct social action. The ways in which various three-sided footballers articulate the need to reach beyond the staid dialectics of Marx should be considered within this lineage of autonomous activism.

The Liminal

The use of the term liminality within this thesis is informed by Victor Turner's framing of 'the liminal' as a state or process which is 'betwixt and between' the everyday and the exceptional. Thus it is a state which can act as a threshold for new forms of consciousness and a site of radical political possibility. In this sense, liminality holds the ability to nurture and create new forms of community and non-hierarchical solidarity. Liminal spaces of play and collective action can also destabilise social relations, political certainties and pre-existing practices. However, these radical possibilities should also be understood as

ambivalent given that the temporary disruption of the social, political and sporting order may offer only distinctly manageable forms of dissent. This duality of the liminal encapsulates the inherent difficulties of translating transient feelings of liberation into practical and tangible change. This is an issue which has characterised scholarly debates surrounding the efficacy of the neo-situationist revival and various forms of creative activism over the last 30 years. It is also an issue which can be further explored in the work of Murray Bookchin and Hakim Bey in their contrasting concepts of 'Lifestyle Anarchism' and 'Temporary Autonomous Zones'.

Magico-Marxism

Magico-Marxism was a term first adopted within 'Transgressions: A Journal of Urban Exploration' in 1996. It neatly summarises the ways in which various creative activist groups in the UK were seeking to reach beyond the seemingly redundant 'class war' rhetoric which characterised the far Left throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It sought to re-appropriate and reuse these empty slogans within the context of a neo liberal hegemony typified by Margaret Thatcher's market oriented mantra that 'There is no Alternative'. As a counter to such defeatist proclamations (and in the wake of a number of profound political setbacks), Magico-Marxism fused polemical Marxist-Leninist revolutionary language within dense myth making which attempted to tie together seemingly unrelated narratives surrounding the unwritten history of the British Empire, the Occult Magick of Aleister Crowley, Pagan Folk Culture and the nascent anti-globalisation movement. A number of Magico-Marxist inspired texts also interweave three-sided football within such unlikely literary fusions: notably in the LPA Newsletter and related DIY publications.

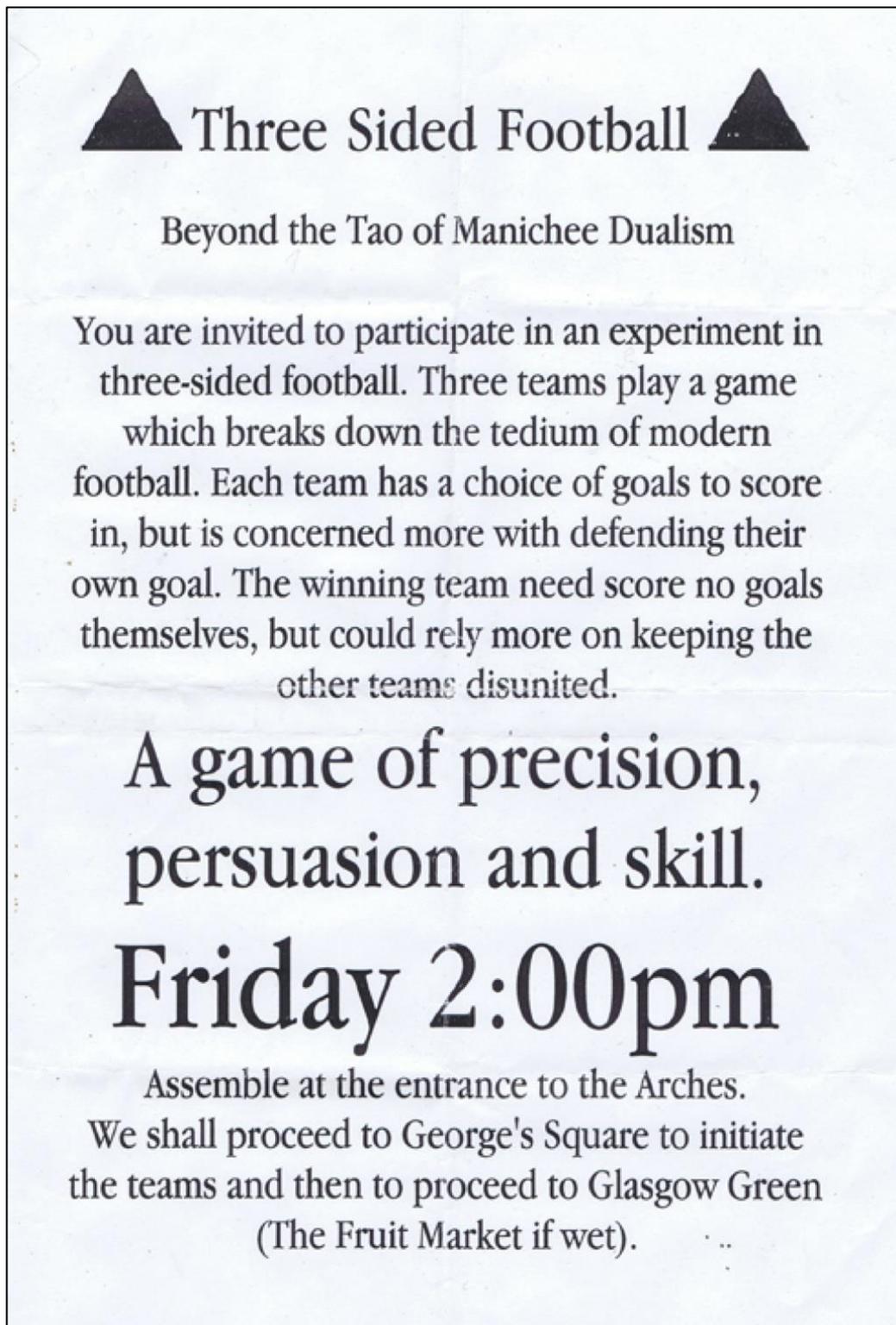


Figure 1. Flyer from first known 3SF game in 1993. (Courtesy of WNLA)



Figure 2. Letterist 3SF Manifesto 2016. (Courtesy of DAMTP)



Figure 3. Edinburgh Situationist Disunited Online Flyer 2018. (Courtesy of R.T)



Figure 4. Alytus 3SF Experiments #1. (Courtesy of L. Blissett)



Figure 5. Alytus 3SF Experiments #2. (Courtesy of L. Blissett)



Figure 6. SOFC Team Photo 2015 (Courtesy of SOFC)



Figure 7. Triball League Group Photo March 2017. (Courtesy of Triball)



Figure 8. Philosophy Football 3SFC Team Photo 2018 (Courtesy of Philosophy Football)



Figure 9. St Kilda 3SF Melbourne 2016 (Courtesy of 3SFAU)

Introduction

Three teams. Three goals. One ball. Don't concede.

A Brief History of 3SF

Born in a time of Manichean 'Cold War' political oppositions and devised as an illustrative example of his notion of 'trialectics', Danish artist and philosopher Asger Jorn first conceived of three-sided football (3SF) in 1962. 'Situated' within an open letter to the renowned nuclear physicist and former *Akademisk Boldklub* (Academic Football Club) goalkeeper, Niels Bohr, Jorn argued that a new trialectic iteration of football could demonstrate how moving beyond dialectical (or in this case two-sided) approaches produced a radically altered 'complimentary logic'. This imaginative re-animation of the 'beautiful game' would ultimately either have a neutralising influence on player relations or stimulate an 'actual explosion' on the pitch. Either way, the team which conceded the least goals would be the victor.

Although a seemingly simplistic sporting proposition, 3SF was at once an irreverent and obscure critique of the limits of dialectic materialism, the 'Latin centric' functionalist nature of Euclidian geometry, and also a reaction to what Jorn lamented as the 'pseudo-objective' scientific logic which pervaded capitalist culture. In line with his absurdist involvement with the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (IMIB) and the recently formed Scandinavian Institute of Comparative Vandalism (SICV), 3SF was another 'open creation' through which Jorn was able to play within the flux and flow of alternative scientific 'truths', 'actual and imaginary solutions', and revolutionary prospects. Much like the imprecise and rebellious brush strokes expressed through his 'automatic' painting technique, Jorn's trialectical theorising (and his involvement in the above mentioned avant-garde collectives)

intentionally set out to defy the rigours of rationalist scrutiny, whilst also reaching beyond existing aesthetic, political, sporting and philosophical traditions.

In a review of a retrospective exhibition of Jorn's work at the Lefebvre Gallery in New York (no relation to Henri), Guy Atkins suggested that trying to make 'sense' of the Danes playful political philosophy was akin to pitching a chess master against a footballer who stands upon the chessboard and 'kicks around the pieces' (1983: 10). Perhaps due to this elusive impenetrability, and indicative of his little known influence within the Situationist International (SI), (the prominent revolutionary political collective active between 1957 and 1972) - 3SF remained a purely abstract philosophical exercise until the first 'recorded match' was played in Scotland in 1993.

Held as part of the experimental programme at the Glasgow Anarchist Summer School, and in a collaboration between the autonomous Workshop for Non-Linear Architecture (WNLA) and the recently revived London Psychogeographical Association (LPA), in this context 3SF became a material practice through which an unlikely coalition of 'ultra-left' artists, anarchists, architects, writers, 'autonomous astronauts', psychogeographers and footballers explored new forms of 'neo-situationist' politics and public interventions. Although the structure and form of the game remain loose and contested to this day, the central premise of those early experimental games was as follows; three teams, three goals and one ball. Preferably with matches played on a hexagonal pitch.

Following on from its first (im)practical realisation, matches of 3SF were further developed in London throughout the 1990s by a number of outlier autonomous political groups and their associated DIY publications. Reports of the games revolutionary trielectical potential filled the pages of a number of journals and fanzines, including the LPA Newsletter and early issues of the 'Fatuous Times'; a parodic absurdist situationist inspired art-zine which was widely distributed by activists across the capital. These texts further developed the myth surrounding 3SF and placed the activity within other 'Magico-Marxist' conspiratorial

digressions about an underground network of 'psycho-activists' who were attempting to disrupt the ancient 'ley lines' which held the population back from open insurrection.

As an absurdist literary and political device, 3SF was also soon taken on (and appropriated) by a number of other autonomous creative groups in Europe. These included the Italian based Luther Blissett Project who announced their imposing presence to the wider 3SF community with a politico-sporting intervention at the *Piazza d'armi de Forte Presentino*. This game was a response to AC Milan's last minute capitulation to Ajax Amsterdam in the Champions League final and Silvio Berlusconi's scandalous resignation as Prime Minister in 1995. Alongside producing further parodic texts about the games founder, (this time re-identified as the former Watford FC striker Luther Blissett), the 'neo-autonomia' *fantasista* artists and cultural activists also held a number of 'underground' 3SF 'European Championships' in Bologna and Rome in the mid to late 90s.

Not content with such earthly geo-political concerns, another creative activist collective called the Association of Autonomous Astronauts (AAA) also held a number of intergalactic anarchist conferences across Europe at this time. These 'conferences' (and their associated official programmes) espoused 3SF as an ideal training mechanism for non-instrumental left-wing space expeditions. AAA's parodic motto "attempt the impossible, achieve the absurd!" typified the despairing political moment for a section of the European Left who felt the only way to work towards an alternative politics was through ironic post-modern pastiche. This form of 'radical nostalgia' (Bonnett, 2007) utilised the revolutionary politics of the 1960s, Chaos Magic, and the seemingly redundant 'Class War' rhetoric of the 1980s to create heightened political hyperbole and aggrandised mythopoesis about the imminent revolution which never came. Hinting at 3SF's future pedagogical potential and the demonstrable accessibility of such absurdist sporting diversions, the AAA were also invited into primary schools in Vienna to demonstrate the game to a number of excited classes during this time.

In the 2000s, 3SF continued to grow in popularity. Alongside a number of notable experimental 3SF artistic events held as part of the 'Alytus Art Strike!' in Lithuania (which included 9 simultaneous games on the same field and rotating bicycle goals), the game was also staged within a number of 'conventional art contexts' for the first time. This included in Dortmund's 'Glamour and Globalisation: Football, Media and Art Festival' held at Phoenix Hall in 2006. Also, at the Beacons Arts project in Lincolnshire, UK, where artists Sally O'Reilly and Mel Brimfield staged a game between local teams within a participatory public art programme in 2007.

In 2010, 3SF became a literal 'political football' in the run up to the UK general election as O'Reilly again used the game as a novel form of exit poll between Tory, Liberal Democrat and Labour representative teams at the Whitechapel Gallery in East London. Indicative of this new artistic sporting trajectory, 3SF was also used a number of times from 2009 to 2012 by French arts collective *Pied la Biche*. This French team of curators used the game to engage conventional football teams and the general public in contemporary art festivals in Lyon, Metz and Bretigny-sur-orge.

In the slipstream of such 'mainstream' curatorial applications, during the 2010s, 3SF became at once a formalised competitive sport, a commercial gimmick and also a pedagogical tool. Indicative of 3SF's recent diffusion, loosened from its emergent context, in 2011 a Belarussian telecoms operator (Velcom) sponsored a 400 team nationwide tournament of '3G' (based on 3SF) which was televised by national broadcasters and included an extensive rule book and accompanying video game. Equally, in Malaysia, Nestlé's 'Milo' drink used the game as part of its 'NeXt Games' promotion of 'future sports' in 2012. More recently, the game has been appropriated as a tool in the service of the 'revolutionary soft drink', Coke Zero. However, in Colombia, a more noble variant of 3SF was also developed in 2012, called Futbol 3 Colombia (F3C) which has since been awarded local governmental support in recognition of its efforts to promote a spirit of 'national unity' and 'community reconciliation' through football.

In the UK, following the games inclusion in the 'triolympic protests' against the London Olympics at the South London DX Gallery, the Luther Blissett Deptford League (LBDL) was established by a mix of emergent 'political football teams', Polish builders and 'Strategic Optimists' in the summer of 2012. Over the first three seasons, several new 3SF teams emerged looking for a sanctuary from the commercial excesses and hyper commodification of the two-sided game. Demonstrating the appetite for alternative (more inclusive) forms of football, these clubs have since made a home within what they perceive as a sport; one that has the ability to better represent its players and act as a pre-figurative site of political and sporting transformation.

3SF can now be considered a global sport. From political protest matches held in Turkey and Lithuania; celebrations of inclusivity in Australia, Malawi, Germany and Borneo; through to a philosophical symposium on the future of football in Spain, 3SF continues to be championed as an alternative and disruptive form of football. Testament to these emerging 'sporting' prospects for the game, the International Three Sided Federation was established in Istanbul by members of the alternative football clubs Philosophy Football FC, Dynamo Windrad and Ayazama FC in 2013. Since then it has also been played in a number of showcase exhibition events within a network of Left-wing alternative football tournaments across Europe.

A pivotal moment for the recent development of the sport was the first 'official' 3SF World Cup held at the Asger Jorn Museum in Silkeborg, Denmark in 2014. Following the success of this tournament there have been a number of other popular developments within 3SF. This has seen the foundation of the Edinburgh Disunited Football League in 2016, the breakaway competitive sporting league of Triball in London Bridge in 2017, and a FIFA produced video, which describes the game mechanics to prospective players and coaches. Reflective of the extended reach of the game, in Alabama another 3SF iteration has recently been established called 'Tritball', which has been running three teamed youth soccer events since 2016.

In August 2017, the 2nd 3SF World Cup was held in Kassel, Germany. Here, one of the founding members of the LBDL, New Cross Internationals (the team which I had recently joined) became 3SF 'World Cup Champions'. However, despite football 'coming home' for the first time since the halcyon days of 1966, the victory was a bittersweet development for the game. 3SF's formalisation, codification and emergence as a new form of football had not been without controversy and contestation. In this sense, New Cross' victory proved to be a tipping point.

In the face of a seemingly intractable sporting hegemony, a schism developed in the playing community as to 3SF's future prospects and current trajectories. Whilst many players saw nothing wrong with the development of the game within the structures, practices and values associated with two-sided football, others sought to bring 3SF back to its experimental political origins. This aimed to resist its complete 'recuperation' and 'spectacularisation' within the sports-industrial-complex.

It is within the context of 3SF's recent sporting diffusion (and its accompanying contestation) that I entered the field as a player-researcher in 2017. Consequently, it is also where I firmly 'situate' my research about the game.

Why Study 3SF Sociologically?

As detailed above, few emergent sports can offer a comparably profitable site (and quixotic history) through which to consider the diverse questions which have informed and shaped my research. In this regard, 3SF's liminal status between a competitive sport, a form of creative activism and a performance art practice, enables research into the game to consider the enduring relevance and legacy of the SI in contemporary culture. Also, the uncertain prospects found in the realisation of such forms of playful politics. Furthermore, an ethnography of 3SF can ask more broadly how abstracted philosophical or political ideas are realised in 'the fully lived space'. Moreover, how counter cultural practices are 'broad

coalitions' which become subject to the vagaries of 'democratic will' and necessarily respond to pre-existing societal norms and received cultural paradigms in these popular contexts.

Demonstrative of 3SF's wider sociological significance, the game is also inextricably linked to a recent social movement 'against modern football'. This movement has included the establishment of alternative football clubs and related DIY initiatives aiming to build new forms of political solidarity through the grassroots game. In this regard, research into 3SF is able to probe at the complex cultural meanings and ontological investments which are made to football in 'neo-liberal' times. Also, it forces us to consider what the motivations of players involved in these projects are and whether such alternative engagements become expressive of a latent anti-capitalist and communitarian impulse within the grassroots of the contemporary game.

Within a broader sporting context, research into 3SF further questions how alternative sporting practices emerge and are produced in space, what factors affect their form, structure and values. Also, whether the game offers sites of practical consciousness and reflexive resistance for players. This line of inquiry may show us the ambivalent nature of individual and collective agency in sports activism and the new typologies needed to frame such actions.

Further to how a study of 3SF can be of use to the sociological field (and beyond), through an immersive study into the dynamism of the game, we can ask how players involved in 'left-wing' alternative sports may reflect upon, and negotiate, the difficulties of reaching beyond the 'symbolic capital' and 'doxic logics' of inherited competitive team sport. Also, how sports remain syncretic embodied cultural practices operating within distinct flows and tempos which are informed by the everyday, but also have the ability to transcend these quotidian contexts. In this sense, my research project is also drawn into wider philosophical debates about the political importance of play in achieving a 'revolution of everyday life'.

Also, how social actors are able to engender a renewed 'right to the city' through transient occupations and interventions into strictly controlled or policed urban spaces.

Novel Approaches and Existing Studies

Indicative of the variety of contexts in which 3SF has been played and developed over the last three decades, research into the game could draw from a number of theoretical frameworks and literatures. These include: art history, political theory, radical geography, literary criticism, media theory and the sociology of sport. In this regard, Collier's (2017) art historical study into the game remains the only other work which has dealt with 3SF in any depth. His approach contextualises 3SF through its links to the psychogeographic revival in the early 1990s and focusses (more generally) on Jorn's unorthodox approach to aesthetics in relation to his Marxist revolutionary philosophy. Relying solely on correspondence from prominent figures within the activist milieu which spawned the first practical realisation of the game, Colliers' work (however valuable), does not seek to democratise the narratives about 3SF, nor consider the complex meanings that have been given to the contemporary game as a sporting practice.

In contrast, my research 'situates' 3SF as it has emerged as a codified sport and distinct creative political practice. It asks why 3SF has found an enduring social life as an alternative sport. Also, what its practice can tell us about social actors' relationships to politics, art and football in contemporary culture. Further, my research gives voice to those who have continued to shape 3SF over the last decade. It offers a space (previously denied) for players who have been involved since its inception to reflect on 3SF's recent trajectory as a popular sporting practice.

The diverse meanings projected onto 3SF from various players (depending on the context) speaks to critiques of the benign, apolitical function of art in society, a dissatisfaction with received and 'legitimate' forms of political activism, and also, the alienating nature of

'modern football'. Therefore, in its critical appraisal of how each of these positions potentially collide or coalesce on the same fields, my analysis offers a complexity that partial descriptions of the social field of 3SF have thus far missed. In short, the main contribution of the following thesis is as the first sociological study into the dynamic interrelationships made between sporting space, play and activism within the cultural practice of 3SF.

Project Outline

My analysis of 3SF will not be bound within discrete disciplines or singular prescriptive theoretical explications. Rather, it begins by contextualising the recent developments of the game within a burgeoning literature of what I am defining as the 'alternative soccerscape'. In this sense, I align my work with a growing number of academic studies into various 'DIY' football initiatives across Europe which are seeking to wrest control of the game away from the dominant market-oriented logics of neoliberalism and hyper-commodification. In outlining the critical contributions and potential limitations of such studies, I also respond to the need articulated by Carter, Burdsey and Doidge (2019) for activist researchers to produce politically engaged scholarship which is committed to both transforming sport and epistemological approaches to the Sociology of Sport.

Chapter 1. The Alternative Soccerscape

What football means to different people and who is empowered to articulate that meaning, are multi-layered and complex cultural questions. Since the establishment of the Premier League in 1992, football has been championed as a key export success of British business. Thus, it is a commodity form which is immersed within wider global flows of capital. However, activists, fans, and players have continued to nurture alternative contexts to experience a sport, which for many, has also lost a key part of its 'social use' as a crucial node of local and civic identity. Reflective of a wider movement that rejects 'modern football' and the unregulated commercial excesses of the game, the 'alternative

soccerscape' has taken up the baton passed from the DIY ethos of the supporters trusts of the 1980s and 1990s. In doing so, they have formed coherent and vocal critiques against what they also perceive as the endemic corruption of the governing bodies of football.

Fan-activist groups have formed 'phoenix' clubs which they perceive to better reflect their communities. Notable examples in this regard are FC United of Manchester and AFC Wimbledon. Amateur grassroots clubs, such as Republica Internationale and Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls, have also emerged as key sites through which non-professional players relationships to football and politics are rehabilitated in an inclusive transformative sporting environment. Placed within this cultural milieu, my first literature review contextualises 3SF in a wider lineage of resistance in football. It also surveys existing academic approaches to football activism within the Sociology of Football. Next, it identifies how contemporary forms of opposition should be understood as discursive. As such, it becomes necessary to define the nature of football resistance (and football more generally) in 'neo-liberal times'.

Utilising Kennedy and Kennedy's (2016) explication of the 'ontological uncertainty' which surrounds football as a contemporary cultural form, Chapter 1 argues how activism within football is directly related to the uneasy position the game occupies between a community asset and commodity form. Here, I identify key analytical concepts which have sought to variegate and complicate our understandings of the reflexive forms of resistance found in contemporary football. These are specifically, Numerato's (2019) 'Fan Activism Complex' and Kennedy and Kennedy's 'Social Entrepreneurialism' and 'Social Transformationalist' DIY trends. Through the potential application of these fluid taxonomies to the wider field, the chapter further considers how the vast majority of recent literature about 'activism in football' sits within a 'reformist' tendency and is focussed on fan groups. This reformist tendency fundamentally restricts the ways in which activist projects in football have been able to reach beyond existing sporting structures, outside of current institutions, and the wider neo liberal narratives of 'self-reliance' and 'economic sustainability'.

Chapter 1's primary role is to identify how 3SF fits within a trend of what Numerato terms 'activism through football', and what Kennedy and Kennedy term a 'social transformationalist' movement in DIY football. It further tests this contention to consider how a number of recent case studies have emerged which offer comparable player authored and player focussed ethnographies in the alternative soccerscape. These studies detail the 'transformational' experiences of amateur players actively seeking new contexts for participation.

With a particular focus on existing studies into the UK based clubs of Republica and Easton Cow Boys and Cow Girls, I aim to question the staunch anti-capitalist critiques held (and identified) within such initiatives. Also, how the lack of sub-altern voices or wider application of theoretical frameworks limits existing studies into the transformationalist trend in DIY football activism. In this regard, this chapter further articulates the contribution of my research in democratising and complicating such positivist, hagiographical and androcentric studies.

By situating 3SF within a wider network of alternative clubs and tournaments held across Europe over the last two decades, my first literature review chapter places 3SF within a wider trend of 'desportized' football found within the alternative soccerscape. This is highlighted namely through Sterchele and Saint-Blancat's (2015) study of the 'Mondiali Antirazzisti' in Modena. In considering other analogous forms of 'desportized' football (and the related literature) the chapter then draws out a classical philosophical quandary found in my work, as to the productive capacity of both rule bound and free form play in 3SF, or what Caillois (1961) terms 'Ludic' and 'Paidic' play.

Chapter 2. The Production of Space, Situationism and Creative Activism

Having foregrounded my research within the existing literature about the alternative soccerscape, my second literature review chapter offers a more expansive and wider

reaching theoretical consideration of the complex social field of 3SF. It offers a number of theoretical paradigms through which to move my research forward. In this regard, Chapter 2 begins with an explication of Bourdieu's concepts of 'Metanoia', 'Symbolic Capital' and 'Doxa' and how these may be applicable to my case study. Through these concepts, it builds a framework through which to analyse and assess the competing experiences of play found on the same hexagonal pitches. Also, it is an approach which allows me to consider the unseen structures and 'symbolic' exclusory practices which may have influenced 3SF's recent trajectory as a sport which is vital for my first analysis chapter.

Given 3SF's relatively recent emergence as an alternative form of football, this literature review chapter considers how new forms of physical culture are produced, contested and realised in the 'fully lived' space. This forms a major part of my analysis and is my primary research question which runs throughout this project. Utilising the work of French spatial theorist, Lefebvre, I detail how the production of sporting spaces are governed by three conceptual strands: namely, 'Spatial Practice', 'Representation of Space' and 'Spaces of Representation' (or in other terms 'perceived', 'conceived' and 'lived' spaces). In privileging my analysis within the ambiguity and contested nature of the 'fully lived' spaces of 3SF, the chapter constructs a further theoretical framework through which to relate 3SF as an ambivalent heterotopic site of agency, stricture and belonging. This is a vital paradigm in my later analysis of the myriad of ways the game of 3SF has moved on from its emergent context.

Further equipped with the work of Lefebvre, I then question what the embodied experiences of playing 3SF are able to tell us about lived spatial practices and how the use of the body can be considered a central site of political resistance. In this sense this question investigates how the liminal and fleeting experiences of activism in sport allow players to test out alternative engagements with politics, space and identity.

In order to sufficiently analyse the plurality of perspectives about the game of 3SF, (and in preparation for my second analysis chapter), the final section of my literature review considers the relevance of wider comparative literature relating to trajectories of codification and enclosure in 'lifestyle sports' (Wheaton, 2013) and the playful politics of 'protestival' and 'alter-globalisation' movements. Moreover, it places 3SF (uneasily) within an enduring legacy of the Situationist International in contemporary culture. Also within the 1990s 'neo-situationist' revival in European autonomous activism. This serves to identify the ambivalent relationships between 'play' and politics through the key SI tactics of psychogeography and *detournement*. Also, their relevance to our understandings of the enduring meanings attached to 3SF as it is practiced today.

Lastly, in reaching beyond sporting paradigms, I identify crucial comparative case studies for 3SF within what Ravenscroft and Gilchrist have described as the 'anarcho-politics of leisure' (2013). This enables my analysis and discussion to consider a further research question which relates 3SF more broadly to how various other emergent political/creative activist projects have emerged to counter the sense of dislocation and anomie found in 'neo liberal times' over recent decades. Also, how these activist projects may similarly be characterised in part by a quixotic refusal to be bound within rational or productive schemas privileged within scientific academic discourse.

Focusing on the existing literature on the primarily London-based 'creative activists' found within the 'Midnight Cricketers' and the Counter Olympic Network, (who have performed various public interventions as a reaction to 'serious politics' through the unlikely combination of parodic sport, humour, politics and performance art) I further consider 3SF's equally uneasy relationship within contemporary art institutions. This enables me to question if the game should be considered within a recent trend of 'artification' (Hughson, 2019) of football or within Froggett's (2019) 'Art-Sport' paradigm.

In summary, my literature review begins with how best to situate 3SF within an 'alternative soccerscape'. In doing so, it uncovers a number of apposite paradigms through which I consider the game in specific relation to activist DIY movements against modern football. The second half of the review opens out my discussion of 3SF to build a theoretical framework which can relate the complexity of the social field. Also, to think more broadly about the uncertain and fragile nature of projects seeking social transformationalism. Having built a theoretical grounding and understanding of 3SF within my literature review, my methodological chapters then go on to develop how I practically applied this framework to my data collection and analysis. Also, it appraises what difficulties or ethical dilemmas I encountered in the field and justifies how I examined, thematised and discussed such a diverse, diffuse and complex social practice.

Chapter 3. From Excessive Player to Excessive Pundit

My methodological approaches, reflections and rationale are also split over two contrasting chapters. It begins with an assessment of the difficulties of privilege, normalisation and assumptions of access, which accompany immersed research. My methods then considers the complex role of the 'athlete-researcher' in participant observation. The majority of the first methods chapter, however, is devoted to further exploring ways to relate and identify the dynamic tensions of agency and stricture found within 3SF. In this regard, I build upon Hughson and Inglis' (2000) work on the 'dynamic spatiality' of soccer spaces. This enables me to develop a tool kit through which to assess what forms of 'practical', 'embodied', or 'critical' consciousness, may be found on the hexagonal fields of play, and within the 'dialectic of milieu and action'. In aligning with their work, I also adopt an augmentation of Husserl's 'body-subject' paradigm; one which justifies how my application of a 'phenomenologically-informed' and 'enactive' sociological analysis can uncover 'new typologies' of resistance in 3SF. This is a much needed addition to the wider study of the alternative soccerscape.

A central aim of my research was to understand how participants made sense of the experience of playing 3SF on their own terms. As such, Chapter 3 lastly considers what MacIntyre (2016) would describe as the 'quest for narrativity' from within the 3SF community. In seeking analogous 'action-oriented' and embodied approaches to the study of football players' 'practical consciousness', I therefore identify the importance of the recent 'enactive phenomenology' of Gesbert, Durny and Hauy (2017) in uncovering the 'participatory sense making' made by football players. This offers a useful tool in my own attempts to capture the 'situated experiences' and 'narrative horizons' of 3SF players from those directly involved in the action.

Chapter 4. Approaches and Reflections

My second methods chapter provides a systematic description of how my research data was collected and thematised. It also offers a number of justifications relating to sample size and fieldwork approaches. Moreover, this chapter considers the limitations of my own 'conscious subjective' approach to the 3SF field and reflects upon the benefits of ethnography and interviews in this regard. It also considers the unconscious bias and androcentric privilege, (which although mitigated against), still runs throughout my research. Given my active involvement in the 3SF community over the last three and a half years, (both as a committed player and the primary team liaison for the London 2020 3SF World Cup), I outline the access I had to a wide demographic of players which may not have been possible in other more 'remote' academic circumstances.

Chapter 4 also details the necessity of visiting anarchist and activist archives of the LPA and related publications, given the 'samizdat' nature of much of the early literature about the game and related activities. Lastly, this chapter shows the ethical responsibilities that I had towards my research group and the productive tensions found within my own 'ethnographic presences' (Fetterman, 1998) in the field. These 'presences' both challenged the powered

relationship between research and the researcher whilst also continuing (in part) to replicate or reinforce such divisions.

Following the comprehensive survey of my methodical rationale and further reflections on ordering and validity of the data gathered, my thesis then moves on to analysis and discussion. This brings to the fore how the responses and actions of participants speak directly to my main research questions (see below). My analysis chapters also highlight how the study of the game can contribute to our wider understandings of the difficulties encountered by those seeking to engender lasting or sustainable change through alternative forms of sports, activism and DIY communities.

Chapter 5. 'Definitive Tensions'

In keeping with the triolectic 'spirit' of 3SF, I split my analysis into three discrete chapters. Although there are necessarily overlaps between the themes touched upon in each, my first analysis chapter pivots around an explication of the 'Definitive Tensions' which came to the fore during the 2017 World Cup in Kassel. Utilising Eichberg's (1998) 'triolectic of sport' model, I show the effects of the ontological and semantic uncertainty which abounds within 3SF. This chapter also acts as a springboard for my subsequent investigation into how 3SF provides meaning and purpose for those involved in the play. In this regard, Chapter 5 aims to give the reader some broader contextual knowledge about the fragmented and contested social field of 3SF and the difficulties encountered in realising an inclusive DIY 'Sport for All'. In this sense, it speaks directly to a main research question of the thesis which asks,

How are alternative sporting spaces produced, sustained and developed?

In order to respond to the above question I begin by showing how 3SF offers participants a chance to 'queer football' and nurture a dynamic space for fostering 'inclusive masculinities'. It also critically questions the myriad of motivations of social actors who seek alternative forms of physical culture. Following this, (and with Bourdieu) Chapter 5 then considers the 'deadly seriousness' which has accompanied 3SF's development as an 'achievement sport'. Also, whether the formalisation, codification and replication of normative sporting modes of hyper-competition and hierarchy has changed the game. At this juncture, I demonstrate how 3SF as a recently formalised sport in London has had to contend with exclusory forms of 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell 2009) and 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) as a popular practice. These are values which also pervade and inform normative binary competitive sporting environments.

This identification enables a wider discussion about how social actors have attempted to prevent the game replicating the structures and values of two sided competitive football in order to sustain 3SF as an 'alternative' practice. In this regard, Chapter 5 lastly responds to Sterchele's (2015) calls for the further study of quotidian contexts of 'desportized football' and explores the reflexive reforms introduced at the LBDL in efforts to increase participation. In highlighting the collective response to dwindling numbers in London, it shows how 3SF offers a unique site of embodied 'practical consciousness' within the alternative soccerscape, where players have been empowered to play towards a triolectic transformation of football from below.

Chapter 6. 'Play and Politics'

Having outlined the plurality of perspectives regarding the recent trajectories of 3SF as a competitive formalised sport, Chapter 6 provides a platform to explicate the enduring association of the game as a form of unorthodox political praxis and 'experiential' play. Here, I am able to further consider another of my key research questions which runs throughout each chapter. This question asks through the study of 3SF,

In what ways does sport/play offer a liminal space through which participants feel able to test out and realise alternatives?

Building upon the latent liminality of 3SF identified and discussed within my analysis thus far, Chapter 6 seeks to understand how the games contextual links to the Situationist International and Jorn provides a productive site for players to remake their relationships to politics and praxis in diffuse and often oblique ways. Although not representative of the wider playing body sampled for this project (10 of 44), this vocal minority remain prominent and influential figures in developing experimental forms and iterations of the game. This sample further points to an alternative outlier vision for the game in line with its political origins and emergent context. Also, it points to broader issues relating to how transient embodied spatial interventions in 3SF offer valuable moments of transgression within everyday life.

Chapter 6 begins by detailing the importance of psychogeography as a revived Situationist practice through which select players have been able to ‘find the revolution again’ and make politics ‘more fun’. In identifying what Slabina (2014) calls a ‘grounded playfulness’ within the liminal spaces of 3SF, next, the chapter considers what tangible political potential players consider their actions to hold. This highlights the importance of play (in its liminality) for players to realise new forms of solidarity, community and praxis.

Placed within the wider context of creative activism, the second half of this analysis shows how ‘haiku 3SF games’ serve as a way for participants to regain what Lefebvre has termed ‘the right to the city’ through the ‘dwelling’, intervention and occupation of urban space and within art gallery contexts. This discussion draws upon a further research question of mine as to how 3SF and its associated psychogeographic activities may reflect a wider sense of dislocation and anomie in ‘neo liberal times’. In this regard, I consider how the game may

reflect an urgent need to counter the alienating consequences of a seemingly intractable political status quo and the increasing atomisation of communities in urban life.

Given the parodic and absurdist political narratives which have long informed the game, this analysis chapter lastly takes the joking, parody and laughter which accompany the game (in print and pitch) as a serious point of discussion and an elusive part of the analysis. Here, I consider absurd humour as a political tool. Also, how a refusal to play by received conceptions of 'serious' politics, sport or art, represents both a form of ironical 'Mutant-Situationism' (Bonnett, 1999) and a distinct form of protest against rational logic. Moreover, I widen the analysis of 3SF once more to consider how an 'underground of laughter' (Eichberg 2010) offers subversive 'intonations' which transform the possibilities of sport for those involved in more normative contexts. In this sense, I show 3SF as an embodied social-bodily process and at once a form of release, refusal and rebellion.

Chapter 7. 'Afterlife'

My final analysis chapter critically examines the 'afterlife' of 3SF as it has evolved into a popular sporting practice and pedagogical device across the globe. This is where the contribution of my research becomes evident in its attempt to answer,

What can the emergence of 3SF within the 'alternative soccerscape' tell us about reflexive forms of popular resistance to 'modern football'?

Also, it reprises in a more broad sense my research question,

How might 3SF reflect a wider negotiation of dislocation and anomie in 'neo-liberal' times?

In this regard, Chapter 7 commences by detailing players attempts to 'practically' move the game on from the work of Jorn and the SI. It offers compelling testimonies of how 3SF has recently become a form of 'popular triolectics' for those seeking to negotiate the divisive and fractious nature of contemporary politics through football.

When defined as an alternative form of football, (which 3SF was for the majority of my research group) I show how the emergent narratives which surrounded the contemporary game reflect wider concerns about the trajectory of modern football and its hyper commodification. Indicative of this paradigm shift within 3SF, the chapter further questions in what ways 3SF has become part of a wider critique which aligns with Kennedy and Kennedy's 'DIY football' projects who seek to create football spaces defined by 'self-management', 'anti-commercialism' and 'community organising'.

With 'community' identified as a key driver behind participant's involvement within the sporting iterations of the game, the adoption of this DIY paradigm further relates how 3SF players and organisers have developed tangible links with other community spaces in South East London. In this sense, my analysis highlights the ways in which alternative forms of football (in London and Edinburgh specifically) offer social actors a chance to remake relationships to space, place and belonging. Also, how 3SF offers an outlet to express the need for forms of autonomous agency. This finding further shows the productivity found in ludic forms of play. Furthermore, it also demonstrates how conceptual political ideas (more broadly) become subject to wider unforeseen social forces and 'strategic appropriations' in the 'fully lived space'.

The final section of Chapter 7 considers the games appropriation in pedagogical settings. Here, it details how football coaches and practitioners have used 3SF in a number of educational contexts to challenge 'passivity' in the classroom; through to the nurturing of a unique sporting space which can include divergent forms of spatial awareness and athletic

intelligence. In building profitable lines of inquiry for future research, I propose that 3SF should be considered as an 'accented alternative' in a global context. In order to demonstrate the need for such approaches, I lastly place the Colombian variant of 3SF (called Futbol3Colombia) within such a local context. This identifies how 3SF can be analysed as part of a wider third sector 'football-for-development' trend in Colombia which has emerged over the last decade.

Key Definitions and Clarifications

Now that I have outlined the broad structure of my project, identified my main research questions, and also how these are then related to within my analysis and discussion chapters, it is important to introduce and clarify a number of key terms or definitions which I will be using in my project. The following section therefore provides a justification for my adapted concept of the 'alternative soccerscape'. It also details how I will approach 3SF (and its related forms of practical consciousness) within a paradigm which can account for the multiple and ambivalent forms of 'resistance identity' found within the game.

The 'Alternative Soccerscape'

Throughout this project I will be using the term 'alternative soccerscape'. In its application I draw inspiration from Guilianotti's adoption of Appadurai's five 'scapes' (1990) through which he considers the complex interconnections of globalisation which are enmeshed within the everyday lives of the general population. These interconnections have fundamentally altered peoples' relationships to football, identity and belonging.

'Soccerscape' was coined in the wake of the dramatic transformations which followed the establishment of the English Premier league (EPL) in 1992; the free movement of players between clubs after the landmark Bosman ruling; and the unprecedented and vertiginous

increase in flows of mediated images and capital which surrounded the sport in the late 20th century. In this context, Soccerscape was defined by Guilianotti as "the geo-cultural circulation of [soccer's] constituent parts: players and coaches, fans and officials, goods and services, or information and artefacts" (1999: 24). The term therefore valuably encapsulated how processes of 'glocalisation' had engendered a restorative effect on the cultural standing of the game in the UK. It also usefully highlighted the dynamic and shifting nature of associated forms of football fandom, alternative practice and spectatorship.

As described above, 'soccerscape', as a concept, initially provided a critical framework to analyse the transnational flows and processes which had accompanied the 'hyper-commodification' of football in the 1990s. However, the concept has subsequently been used in a number of contrasting studies - from a 'Debordian' analysis of 'the spectacle' at English second division football grounds (see Vuolteenaho & Kolamo, 2013), through to the plurality of ways in which social actors on the African continent have adopted, adapted and influenced the game across the world (see Alegi, 2010). With this loose application in mind, my research aligns with Fuller (2017) in finding the term a broad (yet nuanced) heuristic device through which to critically consider the fluid and diverse engagements that social actors have with alternative forms of football: as amateur athletes, supporters, event organisers and community activists.

Beyond 'Left Wing'? Locating Resistance in 3SF

Totten (2014) asks in his ethnographic study of a West Yorkshire Socialist Sunday League football club, how can 'left-wing' ideas be fostered, identified and sustained in the spaces of grassroots football? Whilst my project will seek to ask similar questions of 3SF, I believe it important to consider further the plurality of meanings associated with the term 'left-wing'. Spaaj and Viñas's (2013) study into fan activism in Spanish football is useful here in understanding the complexity of the use of 'left wing' within football scholarship and popular discourse. Framed within the self-defined 'ultra-left' supporters group affiliated

with Cadiz FC, the authors identify how such a nomenclature encompasses projects and political demands as diverse as ‘anti-commercialism’, ‘anti-racism’, ‘proto-nationalism’, ‘internationalism’ and ‘communitarianism’. In highlighting the malleability of such terms, I align with their understanding of ‘left wing’ as a heterogeneous term which can only be used “as a guide to social action and organisation” (2013: 189).

As Tarrow (2011) reminds us, participants involved within social movements have an ‘eclectic engagement’ with any wider aims that may be articulated by dominant voices or top down narratives produced about such groups. Therefore, in order to enrich and complicate our understandings of the activism found in the alternative soccerscape, my research considers how players, fans and organisers within 3SF articulate an ‘eclectic engagement’ with the associated political discourses which surround the game and affiliated networks. In this sense, I contend that those involved in 3SF draw upon ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ ideologies to narrativise and legitimize their beliefs and actions (Heywood, 2011). Equally, that 3SF players operate within what Casals (1995: 84) terms as the ‘periphery of politics’: a space which lies outside of formal organisations and received activist schemas. Identifying these initiatives as ‘broad coalitions’ (Krause, 2019) moves us towards a more tempered approach to the analysis of the everyday realities of resistance in 3SF.

My research acknowledges that ideologies are discursively (re)produced. Therefore, it understands that the political associations which can be made to 3SF are constituted from “a set of complex effects internal to discourse rather than as (merely) some static set of beliefs” (Eagleton, 2008: 78). In this way, through my attempts to relate the struggles for meaning and purpose within the game, I aim to avoid deterministic and teleological assumptions about new and emergent forms of resistance and their apparent ‘leftist’ political association. It is important to be aware of the ‘new typologies’ (Fillis & Mackay, 2014) needed to frame and analyse the ‘coalitions’ which constitute projects within the alternative soccerscape. Therefore, through my use of the term ‘alternative’ I approach activism (when associated with football) as a polysemic term and as a ‘resistance identity’.

This builds upon Castell's contention that fan groups offer distinct 'resistance identities' which are:

...generated by those actors who are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society (2010: 8)

In this 'resistive' regard, my research understands the 'politics' of 3SF as found within the social complexity, eclecticism, ambivalence and fragmentation which constitutes everyday engagements with the game. As such, my project places 3SF as a site of resistance away from the 'dominant logics' of sports practice and received forms (or terms) of political activism. Not wishing to create unnecessary and potentially valued judgements about the nature of participants 'hot' or 'cool', 'inside' or 'outside', or what Cleland (2010) terms 'active and passive' relationships to football, my research will therefore chart what involvement in the game is expressive of about wider power relations in society. Equally, how the forms of resistance associated with playing 3SF have changed, and evolved over time and space to reflect the changing cultural contexts of the game.¹

Further to this evolution within 3SF, Foucault states that resistance to forms of power are always intrinsically bound within relationships to power. With this in body and mind, my project considers what forms of power and agency (if any) are being resisted against and realised through the playing of 3SF. When analysing the trajectory of the game and its constitutive relationship to the bodies involved in the play, it is useful to quote Foucault at length.

¹ Indicative of other comparably variegated academic approaches, studies have grouped such 'alternative' football initiatives in as diverse terms as 'DIY Football' (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2015), 'Anarcho-Football' (Kuhn 2005), 'Radical' (Davidson, 2014), 'Grass Roots' (Porter, 2019) 'Groovy Soccer' (Vogel, 2017), 'Punk Football' (Keoghan, 2014) and 'Blockupy Football' (Numerato, 2019).

[Resistances] are distributed in irregular fashion: the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behaviour...More often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remoulding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds. (1998: 97)

How best to methodologically approach such 'transitory points' in 3SF will be outlined in due course. However, my foundational position for this research project is that social actors have mobilised in distinct and disparate ways through 3SF, representative of a myriad of motivations. My research therefore seeks to relate, on the terms of those involved, how resistance through 3SF finds expression, and is 'inflamed' through certain alternative 'types of behaviour' and 'moments in life'. How participants make bodily sense of (and articulate) such 'moments' and 'behaviours' will be central to my analysis.

With regard to the 'irregularities of resistance' described above, whilst I find much value in Guilianotti and Armstrong's (2007) focus on the 'redolent facts' that can be identified through the sociological analysis of football culture, in turning our backs on the dynamic constitutive process' which govern the content and form of emerging alternative movements in the game, we run the risk of stymieing critical sociological approaches to football resistance.

Resistance movements (and identities), whether termed 'left-wing' or otherwise, should not be understood as flattened, homogenous and static. In this sense, it is my contention that the dynamic, unstable processes and changes occurring within alternative football should be central to studies of the contemporary game. This processual approach, it is hoped, helps us to understand how forms of resistance (and their situated spaces in 3SF) are made up of a

complex node of social conditions and human agencies (and interdependencies) - intentional or otherwise - which develop in dynamic relation to pre-existing structures, institutions and practices in often uneven ways.

In summary, (and crudely paraphrasing Marx), my research aims to show how those who resist the trajectories of modern football may seek to transform the world, but they do so 'under circumstances (and terminologies) existing already, given and transmitted from the past'. Further, that these spectral sporting practices (and political schemas) 'weigh like a nightmare' on those looking to play at alternative 'inclusive' triolectic formulations (Scorehill, 2006).

Conclusion

This introductory chapter began by charting a brief history of 3SF, from the games origins as a pataphysical premise through to its recent trajectories as a codified sport and pedagogical device. It then highlighted the sociological importance of studying the game from multiple perspectives. Also, the diverse avenues of inquiry which have necessarily informed my research. Subsequently, the chapter outlined the thesis structure and defined or clarified key terms.

In providing a comprehensive survey of this research project I have shown how the multiple forms of 'practical consciousness' within 3SF will be identified and analysed in my thesis. Through an analysis of the reflections and actions of those directly involved in the many forms of 3SF play, my thesis will argue that 3SF offers a dynamic and heterotopic space through which social actors feel empowered to re make their relationships to the world in multiple and competing ways. Centering my research on the recent contestations which have surrounded the games formalisation and codification, I show how societal alternatives (sporting or otherwise) are fragile coalitions and complex social fields. Moreover, I highlight

(more broadly) the power of symbolic structures and inherited practices which may guide and shape such alternatives as popular activities.

A major strength of this research project is that it gives space to the plurality of voices within 3SF to reflect on the games recent trajectories on their own terms. Not only does this demonstrate the contestations that can occur within the 'fully lived spaces' of societal alternatives, but it also shows the liminal opportunities that sport and play offer for social actors to escape from the strictures of quotidian existence. Also, to realise alternative forms of praxis and DIY community.

Despite the tendency to read the divergent approaches found within 3SF as irreconcilable and intractable, this thesis argues that the game offers players a chance to articulate their displeasure at the status quo, be that the current political order, the restrictive nature of city space, or the hyper commodification of professional football. In this sense, there is a unity found within the 3SF community. Each iteration seeks (in its own way) to counter the alienation found in 'neo liberal times' through a triolectic, anti-capitalist, sporting alternative.

Research Questions

It is hoped that my introduction offers a cogent and systematic starting point for the reader. However, for the purposes of further clarity and ease of reference I reiterate below my research questions. Although these are revisited at multiple points (and in various guises) throughout this project, in their arbitrary grouping (and articulation) I aim to provide an accessible format through which to assess both my intentions for this research and its efficacy in responding to such questions.

Main Research Questions

- How are alternative sporting spaces produced, sustained and developed?
- In what ways does sport/play offer a liminal space through which participants feel able to test out and realise alternatives?
- What can the emergence of 3SF within the 'alternative soccerscape' tell us about reflexive forms of popular resistance to 'modern football'?
- How might 3SF more broadly reflect a way to negotiate a wider sense of dislocation and anomie in 'neo-liberal' times?

Related Sub Questions

- What are the 'social lives' of abstract political concepts when realised in the fully lived space?

- What motivates those who participate in and organise non-oppositional or alternative sporting events?
- What is the pedagogical potential of 3SF as a form of 'popular triolectics'?
- How can the 'playing body' be understood as a site of political contestation and social transformation?



Figure 10. 2018 Madrid 3SF Tournament (Courtesy of NXI)

Literature Review

Chapter 1. The Alternative Soccerscape

Introduction

This review chapter surveys and synthesises the various frameworks, academic approaches and key case studies found within the existing literature on the alternative soccerscape. It begins with a broad overview of how ‘fan resistance’ within football has been framed and analysed within the sociology of football. Next, it moves towards useful paradigms through which to assess resistance to ‘modern football’ in contemporary culture. Utilising Numerato’s ‘Fan Activism’ complex and Kennedy and Kennedy’s ‘DIY Football’ continuum, Chapter 1 critically considers the delineation between ‘social entrepreneurial’ and ‘social transformationalist’ tendencies thus far identified in the soccerscape. It then focusses on the few existing player-focussed studies. In this regard, I propose that ‘excessive player’ ethnographies may offer an insight into nascent forms of reflexive sporting and political praxis. Situating my research primarily within the ethnographies of Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls and Republica Internationale, I probe at the limitations of existing methodological approaches. In response to Sterchele’s calls for the study of ‘desportisation’ in quotidian football contexts, the review chapter lastly considers how 3SF offers a case study through which to appraise the productive tensions found between Cailliosian notions of ‘Ludic’ and ‘Paidic’ play.

Between Process and the Present.

Given that my research pivots around the social interactions, social processes and complex social interdependencies which can be found within the recent developments of 3SF, it is important at the beginning of this literature review to acknowledge how my project necessarily builds upon the foundational work of Elias and his ‘processual’ successors who helped establish the discipline of sociology of sport. These scholars were (and are) concerned centrally with how societies (and associated leisure pursuits) have broadly

developed and changed over the *longue duree*. Also, what interlinking factors and processes have shaped these cultural practices (see Elias, 1982; Dunning & Sheard, 1980; Guttman, 1994; Eichberg, 1998).

Although my work could be characterised by Elias himself as a sociological ‘retreat into the present’, and as an approach predominantly concerned with more short term socio cultural interactions (found within the minutiae of everyday life), it is nevertheless shaped and informed by this theoretical research (Elias, 1987). Specifically, it draws upon *Eliasian* texts which speculatively chart the ‘civilising’ process through which ‘pass times’ became modern sports. Moreover, it considers how such ‘sportized’ transitions (from what Guttman describes as ‘ritual to record’) are reflective of changing socio-historical conditions and cultural mores directly relating to forms of acceptable, symbolic and regulated violence. Also, my research builds upon their assertions that such ‘sporting’ activities have long provided a liminal space through which to push the boundaries of normative social interactions in the ‘quest for excitement’ (see Guttman 2006; Elias 1978, 1982).

My research is not burdened by the long debates within the Sociology of Sport as to the critical limitations of such ‘figurational’ work (see Hargreaves, 1992; Mansfield, 2008; Colwell, 1999; Stokvis, 1992; Malcolm, 2002). However, in looking at the ‘sportization’ and ‘desportization’ of 3SF, and by championing the centrality of the body to the associated forms of ‘practical consciousness’ found on the fields of play, I enter into a wider dialogue within the academic field about how sports emerge, what has dictated their form, and who has been empowered to shape their trajectories. In this sense, I align my work with that of Dunning and Rojek who state that “social life is about interdependence and interaction” (1992: 9). A further explication of how I am defining and framing ‘desportization’ (based on existing literature and wider case studies) will follow, but firstly, my literature review begins with how football supporters actions have been central to sociological analysis of the game over the last 50 years.

A Sociology of Football Activism: Beyond a History of Violence?

The Sociology of Football has long been a discipline focussed on fandom. From foundational ethnographic enquiries by the 'Leicester School' into the subcultural conditions which led to the rise of fan hooliganism and violence (Bairner, 2006; Dunning, Murphy & Williams 1988; Dunning, 1990; Malcolm and Mansfield, 2013); the changing demographics and consumption habits of fans which accompanied the introduction of all seater stadiums post-Taylor report in 1989 (Conn, 1990; Guilianotti, 1999; Mellor 2008; Turner, 2017); all the way through to the complex relationships of fans and supporters to the game in the 'Premier League era' and the endless accompanying digital content (Sandvoss, 2002; Birmingham & David, 2011; Crawford & Lawrence, 2018), football fandom remains a productive site through which to study constructions of individual identity, changing class dynamics, and collective performances of cultural belonging.

Studies of supporters enduring engagements with the game point us towards the changing role of football within the 'commodification of everyday life' and as a form of cultural, economic and political capital (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2017). They are also indicative of how these constructions intersect with the 'hyper-reality' of the broadcast spectacle (Aji, Hermawan and Riyadi, 2017). In the age of Covid-19, how fan-led discourses will continue to affect the governance, form and trajectory of football remain central to sociological analysis of what has now sadly become the actions of twenty two players cheered on by CGI crowds in near-empty stadia.

Supporters groups and fan organisations have also consistently been at the forefront of demands and practical action to reform the game. This is a rich history of variegated resistance that should be emphasised even within the most pessimistic evaluations of the football-industrial complex (Maguire, 2004; Perelman, 2012). Fan resistance can be traced from the 'Soccer for Sixpence' and 'Balls not Bombs' campaigns of the early 20th century (which were protesting at the price of admissions at grounds and the oncoming mobilisation for war); the samizdat supporter-led DIY fanzines and critiques which emerged in the 80s;

through to the anti-racist activist fan movements which led to institutional reform initiatives such as Kick it Out, Let's Give Racism the Red Card et al. (see Back, Crabbe & Solomos, 2001; Collette 2003; Haynes, 1995; Jones, 1984; Riordan, 1980; Thomas, 1995). However, the first expressions of supporters' discontent with 'so-called' "modern" football in the UK found its voice in the decades following World War II. Notably, as "a response to the increasing professionalization of the transfer market and increasing bourgeois engagement with football." (Numerato, 2014: 136). Here, autonomous fan groups mobilised in the face of what they saw to be a disruption of the subcultural role and agency of fans within football's decision making processes. Also, a rising 'middle-class influence' in the game (Taylor, 1971).

Led by increasing player demands for higher wages and more flexible contracts, football clubs were also transforming to accommodate a rising consumer identity amongst fans alongside the developing cultural mores of sports media broadcasting. These factors were fundamental in reshaping socio-cultural relationships of football clubs to supporters in the local community and subsequent forms of fan resistance in the UK (Goldblatt, 2014).

Despite the varied lineage of fan resistance highlighted above, the majority of research into such subcultural agency and action up until the mid-1990s relates predominantly to hooligan organisation and violence; a distinct, ambivalent, and diffuse form of fan resistance, if it can even be considered that. In this sense, 'modern football' became a site through which various cultural expressions of youthful rebellion, 'quests for excitement' and moral panic were found and analysed (see Armstrong, 1998, 1991; Conn, 1997; Dunning & Sheard 1979; Dunning, 1985; Elias, 1982; Guilianotti, 1994, 1999; Hughson, 1998; Holt, 1991; King, 1996; Marsh, 1979; Murphy 1988, 1991; Stott, 1996; Pearson, 2009; Williams, 1989).

Beyond the 'configurations' of fan violence long associated with British football, a thriving site of autonomous fan critique has also been identified in the samizdat fanzine culture and associated anti-racist fan movements prevalent throughout the game during the 1970s and

80s (Duke, 1991; Giulianotti, 1997; Haynes, 1995; Jary, Horne and Bucke 1991; Redhead 1991). DIY supporters groups and their accompanying critical self-published texts nurtured a space to confront issues relating to governance and fan representation all the way through to campaigns against the rise in hooliganism and racism at grounds. These supporter-led efforts at reform were augmented with the subsequent establishment of independent groups such as the Independent Football Supporters Association Network in 1985. Such associations and related campaigns continue to call for strident policies of anti-racism and fan representation within institutional football governance to this day (see Kennedy and Kennedy, 2007; Numerato 2014, 2018)

With the rehabilitation of the 'modern' game in public discourse following the wide reaching reforms enacted after the stadium disasters of Bradford, Heysel, and Hillsborough in the late 80s (and the subsequent establishment of the EPL in 1992), resistance to 'modern football' began to take on new form and content. Here supporters groups and associated campaigners targeted their ire towards the wider alienating consequences which accompanied football's hyper-commodification. Also, its association with Murdoch's nascent media empire and EPL's supra-national commercial standing.

The strident fan-organised movements in the 'EPL-era' have been extensively detailed in scholarship since the late 1990s, as the elite game fully embraced and was concurrently subsumed within largely unregulated flows of global media and capital. In particular, existing studies deal with supporters' opposition to the 'modernization' found at many elite football stadiums; the frequent relocation to outer limits (or 'non-spaces') of cities (Bale 1993; Giulianotti 2011; Hognestad, 2012; King, 1998; Nash, 2000). Studies have also detailed fan-led initiatives to resist the increased costs of attending football events (see Goldblatt 2006; Williams, 2002), and charted the opposition to distinct surveillance tools utilised by police and law enforcement to restrict the movements of supporters at games (see Antonelli, 2010; Guilianotti, 2005).

As a further reaction to the increasingly globalised, commodified and mediatised nature of 'modern football', across the 2010's, numerous sociological case studies have emerged which detail supporters' opposition to the 'neo-liberal' developments of football across Europe. These forms of fan resistance have led to unprecedented attempts to change the game from below. An ever expanding number of club case studies highlight how the breakdown of notions of 'tradition' and 'local community' have been expressed within football fan activist culture. This can be seen through the fan-led protests at Liverpool F.C. (Millward, 2011; Williams, 2012), Everton F.C. (D. Kennedy, 2012), Manchester United F.C. (Brown, 2007, 2008; Dubal, 2010; Millward, 2011) Atlético Bilbao (Groves, 2011), A.S. Livorno (Doidge, 2013), Sankt Pauli F.C. (Daniel & Kassimeris, 2013; Totten, 2014), and Sporting Paulista (Dubal, 2010).

A striking aspect of contemporary football fan resistance (and its associated literature) has been the formation of 'phoenix' clubs in non-league settings in the UK. These are clubs formed as a response to the trajectories of top flight teams. Within these contexts, fan-owned clubs have been analysed as a direct critique of modern football and a form of DIY community building, or 'active citizenship' (see Ruddock, Hutchins and Rowe 2010; Kennedy and Kennedy, 2012; Cleland, 2010). This has most prominently been identified in studies into FC United of Manchester, Spirit of Shankly, Salford FC, and AFC Wimbledon (see Brown 2007, 2008; Giulianotti, 2005; Kennedy and Kennedy, 2012; Kowalska, 2016; Porter, 2011). Also, in the case of Charlton AFC, where fan opposition has led supporters to become committed (if unlikely) community activists (see Millward, 2011).

Given the globalised nature of contemporary football, it is unsurprising that fan resistance and mobilisation has also found transnational flows and networks through which to express their concerns about the game. These have been extensively covered in a number of volumes over the last five years (Canniford, Hill and Millward, 2016; Garcia and Welford, 2015; Garcia and Zheng, 2017; Brandt, Hertel and Huddleston, 2017; Hodges and Brentin 2018; Guschwan, 2015; Mauro, 2015; Webber, 2017).

'Against Modern Football' and Reflexive Resistance

I believe we should understand the distinct forms of fan-activism described above as discursive. Thus, they are each bound to the wider social, political, historical, and cultural conditions in which they are staged. As Beck notes, dissent “undergoes continuous critical revision of the social world in light of new experiences and knowledge” (2003: 98).

Therefore, recent forms of fan activist resistance against ‘modern football’ should be understood as largely a response to contemporary concerns (and latent desires for social change). With this in body and mind, I primarily place my research into 3SF within the nascent literature which has defined and theorised around the specificity of contemporary football and its accompanying forms of activist resistance.

Numerato’s studies into the fan-led ‘Against Modern Football’ movement offer a vital paradigm through which to consider how recent changes within European football have shaped forms of resistance in the soccerscape (2015; 2018). Building upon Archer (2007) and Donati’s (2011) work which sees new forms of fan-activism as cultural expressions of late modern reflexivity, Numerato’s work asks ‘what is being resisted?’ when fans have organised around this simple three word slogan. A slogan which has mobilised disparate fan groups across Europe in a number of ways.

Numerato places those involved in Against Modern Football as ‘reflexive subjects’ and defines that which they are resisting against as the ‘neoliberal manifestations’ of football. This broad and diffuse ‘manifestation’ includes “the institutions and structures typified by private management and ownership, the prevalence of multinational companies and sponsorship to clubs and events and the state policies which reflect wider deregulation of industry” (2014: 136). Drawing similar conclusions to that of Bales’ (2004) spatial analysis of the reflexive ‘topophilic’ links and symbolic ties that supporters have for their club and its environs, Numerato places fan reflexivity as a discursive and emotive consequence of the ways in which supporters are alienated from the clubs, spaces and cultural contexts which

they feel a distinct sense of ownership and entitlement towards. He also identifies the lay usage of 'modern' within everyday footballing discourse as what Jhally (1984: 266) terms as "late-modern, globalized, and deeply entrenched within the media/sports production complex." I will also adopt this definition of 'modern' within my analysis of 3SF.

Rather than interpreting the increasing forms of reflexivity which characterise 'fan activism' as products of a disinterested form of footballing 'flaneurie' (Guilianotti 2002: 34), I align with Numerato (and others) in seeking to relate the productive capacities of reflexivity in contemporary football culture. Here, I argue reflexivity in 3SF should be understood not as an inward and individualised response to the 'global forces of capital', nor as a *fait accompli* within the malaise of neoliberal hegemony, but as a spur towards bottom-up DIY resistance (see Beck, Bonss & Lau, 2003; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). In this regard, I acknowledge how this contemporary reflexive approach to activism in football is a "dynamic transmittable social form rather than as a stable attribute that is strictly bounded to a particular social group." (Numerato, 2014: 140) Thus, it is one which has led to diverse forms of resistance, praxis and consciousness in 3SF and beyond. Further to this, my research will show how social actors within the alternative soccerscape use 'reflexive' engagements with football to express and negotiate wider concerns about the fractious nature of contemporary culture (see Porro, 2006).

The Fan-Activism Complex

Studies into football activism need to account for "the plurality of actors who form part of the critical mass that problematizes the existing social order, the plurality of varyingly intertwined topics that form part of the activism agenda, as well as the plurality of tools used to problematize the existing social order." (Numerato, 2019: 157) As a consequence of this 'diverse repertoire of contention', Numerato develops a 'fan activism complex' in order to detail the conflicts which can be found *within* alternative football movements. This complex is delineated (but not without interrelationships) between 'activism *in* football'-

(activities relating to various socio-cultural aspects of the game, including governance and institutional representation), and 'activism *through* football' – (where the game itself becomes a vehicle to address broader social and political issues). This analytic approach has much to offer in variegating the nature of contemporary fan activism across the sporting spectrum. Also, the ways in which such action is framed and narrativised by the social actors involved. Placing 3SF within this 'complex' my research will move away from simplistic reductive analysis of resistance through sport as either part of a revolutionary vanguard or an 'emergency service'- as a form of resistance mobilised only in times of economic crisis or sporting mismanagement.

Movements 'against modern football' are a heterogeneous and fluid phenomenon, characterised by the minutiae of social relations and competing discourses. At different points (in space and time) they become unified (to an extent) around a central issue or goal. In order to explicate the fragile unity of such movements further, Numerato therefore adopts a 'Sausserian' analysis of the processes of 'loosening' which can occur between the reflexive 'subject' and the object of 'reflection'. This details how fan-activist groups begin to change and divert from the initial core aims of the group over time: where the pretext for actions becomes subject to 'strategic appropriation' by different social actors (Numerato, 2019: 148).

This concept of 'loosening' offers a useful paradigm within my study of 3SF to address the competing ways in which the game has been 'strategically appropriated' and also been subject to 'alteration' by social actors. In this sense, I argue that 3SF is a cultural practice shaped by the myriad of social actors who have joined the game over the last two and a half decades (and 'loosened' it considerably from its emergent context). Investigating the evolving concerns which have shaped recent forms of football activism hopefully lead us to a more nuanced understanding of the wider social life of 3SF and the malleability of conceptual ideas in practice.

Porter's (2019) work further identifies the tensions involved with the 'loosening' which occurs within fan led resistance. Specifically this is found through his detailing of a history of conflict and accommodation between those enmeshed within the emergent club culture of FC United. Pivoting around the conflicts relating to FC United's status as an 'apolitical club', Porter demonstrates how contemporary fan-activism is characterised by "compromise, opportunism, pragmatism—all of which are often considered hallmarks of reasonable action, yet each can also be the source of division, disillusion and conflict, because everyone inscribes their own interpretations and expectations onto their vision of the club." (2019: 178) The critical implications of such analysis for my research is that Porter highlights the difficulties of enacting social change in football through inherited cultural forms and structures. It also reveals the multiple and (often) competing aims of activist groups. Further to this, it exposes the difficulties of social movements (more broadly) as they move from antagonistic protest groups through to their 'awkward accommodation' within formal institutional structures and dominant logics and practices of football culture. I will seek to find such awkward accommodations within 3SF and construct a framework to analyse them appropriately.

Football in 'Neo-Liberal Times'

Kennedy and Kennedy's analysis of 'Football in Neo-Liberal Times' (2016) offers another landmark contribution towards analysis of the contemporary game. Also, the distinct forms of activism it has engendered from fans and players. This follows their shorter explorations of community, identity, and the evolving political economy of football (2007, 2009, 2012, 2015). Crucially in this long form work, the authors identify an 'ontological uncertainty' that abounds at all levels of the game in an era of economic 'de-regulation' and 'hyper-commodification'.

In order to analyse the ambivalent cultural position football holds in European societies, they explain the 'productive uncertainty' of footballs social use through Polanyi's conceptual

lens of ‘fictitious commodities’ (1957) - here cultural activities or forms not created for the market economy become commodified and subject to market forces and relations. Central to this ‘ontological uncertainty’ (for the authors) is that football is a cultural practice upheld for its inherent social value in public discourse, as a community asset, a signifier of local association and a node of civic identity. However, it is also extolled and promoted as a commodity form, one which is a key economic export, a commercial product and is thus subject to the vagaries of economic exploitation and transnational capital. Through this uncertain cultural position, a tension therefore occurs between the competing discourses which continue to surround football.²

These unresolved contradictions provide a productive paradigm to assess the motivations for grassroots football initiatives which have turned away from the elite game and moved towards a myriad of alternative contexts. Therefore I align with their conclusion that football’s dynamic and unstable cultural position is a productive site of tension and a driver of practical popular action in the game. Many social actors within the alternative soccerscape may be mobilised into action based on this ontological tension and through an investment in the idealised cultural narrative of football as a community asset. This highlights the need for ‘new typologies’ to consider political activism and resistance (and its relationship to neo liberalism) in football.³

As Brown and Walsh (2000: 92) further contend, due to the alienating consequences of emotional and social investments in the game, “football fandom thus becomes a site of political struggle over organisation, finance and representation”. This identification demonstrates supporter movements and emergent player / fan run clubs as highly politicised reflexive spaces. It also shows how football activism operates within an evolving dialectic to the ‘drastically reshaped’ political economy of European football in contemporary culture (see also, Kennedy, 2016; Porter, 2019; Cleland, 2015). In line with this contention, my research therefore seeks to understand how those in 3SF perceive

² See also Webber (2017) who also uses Polanyi to frame *Against Modern Football*.

³ A number of scholars identify the need to analyse distinct types of activism involved in football’s alternative club culture as a ‘social movement’ (see Williams 2011; Millward 2011; Poulton, 2016).

‘modern football’ and how its practice may relate to wider attempts to reform football in general.

‘Social Entrepreneurialism’

In the search for novel typologies for football resistance, Kennedy and Kennedy place a nascent ‘grassroots football culture’ along a continuum of DIY counter-cultural activity. This provides a productive, fluid, processual taxonomy to understand the complexity of social actors’ relationships to football (and the associated activist networks throughout Europe) in contemporary culture. This spectrum draws disparate alternative football projects together in similar ways to Numerato’s ‘fan-activism complex’. However, these authors also place the dynamic nature of neo liberal capitalism, (and its effect on contemporary football), as central to the ongoing need to redefine and re-situate the cultural meanings associated with football activism today. This dynamic structural and industrial consideration is a key contribution to existing scholarship and vital for my research into 3SF.

Kennedy and Kennedy further delineate between initiatives which are characterised by the values of ‘social entrepreneurship’ and ‘social transformationalism’. Here an important distinction is made between emergent ‘reformist’ clubs such as FC United of Manchester and AFC Wimbledon; Clubs who have (re) entered the football league system and those transformationalist clubs who seek alternative, autonomous contexts for the game.

‘Social entrepreneurial’ clubs are defined as those who do not resist the logic of commodification per-se, but are part of a reformist tendency of socially responsible ‘DIY’ enterprises in contemporary culture. These DIY projects have been established to check the corporate interests of football and are committed to ‘community investment’. In this sense, the authors group these projects within a wider trend of emergent forms of DIY banking, housing, and food cooperatives. Here, community run projects have been developed based

on ideas of 'localism' and 'social investment', and have been born to counter the relentless interpenetration of transnational companies within the fabric of everyday life (2016).

In this regard, the vast majority of wider literature on contemporary football fan resistance outlined thus far is focussed on this 'social entrepreneurial' tendency. These DIY projects offer fans a sense of civic identity and community association. They are also a reaction against the recent hyper-commodification of the game. However, this trend is also indicative of the ambiguities of 'new localism' within grass roots sport and beyond. It is therefore worth considering at this point how reformist movements which seek bottom up sustainable enterprises within pre-existing market/sporting logics and structures have "preserved and even extended commodified social relations" (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2007).

The Limits of Reformism in the Alternative Soccerscape?

The numerous supporters' lobby groups which have emerged over the last three decades and have successfully challenged the governance of the game at the FA (and in other formal political institutions), point to the efficacy and agency of fans calling for reforms to the game (Barber & Williams, 2002; Cleland & Dixon, 2015; Brown, 2011; Numerato, 2019). However, as much as these groups and the reformist 'phoenix clubs' found within DIY football have shaped the trajectory of modern football, in remaining within the existing structures of power they can often instigate opposite or adverse consequences to their activist agendas.

Goldblatt's work on the 'meaning and making' of English football offers critical insight into the differing perspectives one can draw from a reformist 'DIY ethic' identified within such emergent 'social entrepreneurial' clubs in this regard. Rather than forming a vanguard of resistance to modern sport, he identifies their recent success as part of a 'self-build' solution indicative of the spirit of entrepreneurial urban development under New Labour in the late 1990s. He describes this as a neo-liberal turn "where the dilapidated social and physical capital of the nation would be rebuilt by individuals" (2015: 166). In making this distinction,

Goldblatt highlights the complexity of fan resistance found in FC United as indicative of a “distinct culture of community engagement and participatory democracy...(at once) a performance, a recreation and a reinvention, that attempts to capture the best of old football and its civic identities” (Ibid: 170). With this in mind, it is germane to return to the relevance of Numerato’s work which calls for a need to analyse the lack of widespread change brought about by fan activism in the UK despite significant representation and cultural visibility.

The ‘professionalization’, ‘formalisation’ and ‘institutionalisation’ of supporters groups and clubs in the UK has served a dual purpose. Whilst such recognition has given these activist initiatives a legitimacy and gravitas, it has also stymied the potential reforms which could have been achieved (see also Malcolm, 2000; Martin, 2007; Nash, 2001). With these issues in body and mind, it is important for wider research in the alternative soccerscape to critically consider the limits or marginal gains which have been possible within ‘reformist’ fan movements. Also, how this tendency bolsters discourses for the need for self-reliance and ‘choice making consumer citizenship’ in neo-liberal society (Gent, 2018).

Highlighting the potential limitations of social entrepreneurialism within the alternative soccerscape leads us to a wider philosophical quandary which informs and defines my research about 3SF. This position asks what alternative football initiatives have been studied which demand to be *outside* of the current structures and systems of modern football? What kind of sporting or political transformations do they envisage and achieve? Whose voices have been privileged and why? Also, what forms of counter cultural resistance can be found and analysed within such transformational football activist contexts?

‘Social Transformationalism’

For the purposes of my research, it is germane to move towards the other end of the continuum of resistance identified by Numerato as ‘activism *through* football’ and by

Kennedy and Kennedy as DIY 'social transformationalism'. Here, fiercely autonomous independent clubs and initiatives have emerged which reject all aspects of commercialism and commodification within contemporary football culture. Drawing upon the cluster of recent publications about these autonomous clubs and informal activist networks, Kennedy and Kennedy argue that transformationalist football activist projects foster "alternative social relations that are irreconcilable with a social system that views us as passive consumers of the commodities it produces...(and also form) a collective will to break with the prevailing political economy of late capitalism" (2016: 44). By placing emphasis on 'collective social relations' engendered through such efforts, the authors detail how 'social transformationalism' is built on 'social harmony', 'self-determination' and 'self-government' (2016: 67). Included within this sporting counter-culture are the key comparative case studies to 3SF which include the UK based clubs of Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls FC, and Republica Internationale. Also, Stockholm's SK17.

For Kennedy and Kennedy, DIY 'Social Transformationalism' offers a sporting space to build communities which reject the structures of mainstream football and build communal collective horizontalist practices on the terms defined by community members. These develop and nurture forms of association which subvert the norms and values associated with football as a commodity form. 'Autonomous' grassroots movements are thus defined as clubs whose 'bank of wealth is predicated on networks of human solidarity' and 'community need'. Thus, transforming football is framed as a social political project within such movements. However, within such positivist analysis there is a stark omission of how attitudes on the field of play and the structure of the game itself are transformed, (if at all) within these emergent alternatives clubs and initiatives. Equally, what issues of exclusion or tensions this may bring up for those involved in such projects?

An 'autonomous alternative club network' is explained by the authors as an intervention into the amateur game in order to ensure that the sport remains 'accessible to all', irrespective of ethnicity, class or gender, but not what practical steps are necessary to ensure this is the case. This lack of critical attention to the complex human relationships

occurring within social transformationalism is a limitation of their work. Their emphasis on the more quantifiable, rationalised or functional aspects of 'democratic deficit' or 'community usefulness' runs the risk of flattening analysis of the resistance occurring therein. Or worse still, it fails to consider 'blind spots' in such resistance with regards to the reproduction of patriarchy, ableism and other forms of privilege in football activism.

The transformationalist trend (highlighted above) aligns with Kuhn's rhizomorphic compendium of *Left-Wing Football* first published in 2010. Here he also suggests that football activism within these transformationalist contexts "can be a unique combination of social learning, political education, community building, and sheer pleasure." (2010: 26–27). Whether 3SF has the potential to provide a unique combination of 'political education', 'social learning', 'community building' and 'pleasure', will be a key avenue of inquiry of my research.

However, despite the merits of both Kuhn and the Kennedys' work in bringing these transformational projects to the fore in the alternative soccerscape, they fail to consider fully the complex processes social actors enter into when realising such projects in the everyday. If these football activist initiatives are markers of a latent 'social libertarianism' and are "the most visible vestiges of an alternative, collectivist approach to life in the atomised societies that we now inhabit" (2016: 13), then more nuanced analysis needs to be applied. I therefore take into account the multiple competing voices which constitute these movements and the difficulties involved in realising 3SF.

Projects aiming to transform football often do so in competing and often ambivalent ways. Therefore they are a 'fragmented landscape' (Doidge, Kossakowski and Mintert, 2020). The emergent nature of these alternative clubs/initiatives and the uncertain foundations of their transformational ethos when faced with the demands of wider membership, points to

profitable (or given the subject - anti-profitable) avenues for further study.⁴ Therefore, my research hopes to complicate neat analysis of such DIY collective projects and show the contortions and contestations which are occurring in football activism.

Eschewing top-down analysis, it is within what Crossley and Edwards (2016) determine as the 'nitty gritty' (that which characterises social actors interactions) that I position my research into 3SF. This will give focus to how players make sense of the contestations which have characterised 3SF over recent years as it has become a codified and structured form of 'alternative football'. As Redhead suggests "the libertarianism behind seeing soccer as a resistance movement simply won't suffice anymore" (2015: 20). As such, studies like mine will enrich our understandings of the complex social fields involved in alternative activist projects seeking to engender DIY social transformation through football.

3SF provides a site through which I critically consider related assertions of 'social libertarianism' and 'human solidarity' in the fully lived space of the alternative soccerscape. It also explicates further how DIY transformative agendas are defined by its members on their own terms. As such, my research seeks to investigate what 'narratives of resistance' emerge from the players themselves and whether they perceive their actions as part of a wider movement for lasting change. Also, how this may relate to experiences of the hyper commodification of football. In short, my project hopes to uncover whether the game can be considered as "part of a network of counter cultural relationships that transcend or at least reveal the possibilities to transcend what we experience under capitalism" (Kennedy & Kennedy 2016: 42).

Thus far, this chapter has argued for a recognition of the discursive nature of resistance within football activism. It has also identified the key scholarship which has attempted to analyse football in 'neo-liberal times'. Moreover, it has begun to detail the social complexity

⁴ Within London's alternative soccerscape further studies into Clapton CfC and Dulwich Hamlets FC in South East London, are needed (see Panton & Walters, 2016)

found within the alternative soccerscape, and the need for further studies into this 'fragmented landscape'. Building upon this need, Chapter 1 will now turn (critically) towards the few ethnographic studies which have focussed on players' experiences in the alternative soccerscape.

From 'Excessive Fans' to 'Excessive Players'

For Fiske, 'excessive fandom' is an "active, enthusiastic, partisan, participatory engagement with the text". These excessive fans, "draw distinct lines between who, what, they are fans of, and what they are not" (1989:7). The productive capacity and level of social investment demonstrated by many grassroots and self-organised football 'fan-activists' detailed thus far therefore can be regarded as 'excessive readers' of the game. The 'excessive football fans' have confronted head-on the increasing detachment of elite professional clubs from their local communities. They have established alternative clubs and organisations which are thought to better reflect and uphold civic values of community and social collectivity; however idealised and nostalgic these concepts may be.⁵

Through a survey of the existing studies of these participatory fan-led projects and networks we can identify how football fandom is situated within a post-industrial cultural discourse of heritage, localism and belonging. Also, how the game provides a 'reflexive' space to re imagine, build and sustain societal alternatives to the current sporting order. In this sense, it is important to continue to give space to the fan voices. However, the creation of alternative forms and contexts in which to *play* football should also be a vital part of studies into football activism. My research makes a valuable contribution in this regard. It will highlight the personal narratives and collective cultural meanings inscribed into such transformative projects through a study of the 'excessive players' of 3SF.

⁵ My project in no way wishes to bolster unhelpful dichotomies between analyses of an 'authentic' community fan culture (Porter, 2019) compared to that of the individualised disinterested, club-hopping, 'post-fan' cognoscenti (Giulianotti, 1999), nor between notions of active and passive relationships to the game (Cleland, 2010).

Given the ongoing relevance of Hargreaves' assertion that there is a "virtual absence of unity between those who participate in sport and those who theorise about it", (1990: 300) I therefore place my research into 3SF within the body of scholarship which has emerged since 2011 with regard to 'player-activist' perspectives. This body of work highlights how amateur participation in alternative football can also act as a distinct form of dissent and embodied resistance.⁶

As Tucker's (2020) *Bourdieuian* analysis of 'football capital' suggests, these immersed player perspectives offer opportunities for distinct forms of engaged research. In this regard, the largely auto-ethnographic approaches employed thus far in the field intertwine players' personal experiences with detailed social histories of alternative clubs and player-activist initiatives. However, a major limitation of existing literature is that these studies eschew the plurality of voices which are playing for social change in football. My research will attempt to address this imbalance.

Of particular relevance to my research into 3SF are the journal articles found within the special issue of *Sport in Society* dedicated to 'DIY Football: the cultural politics of community based football clubs' (2015). In this edition are works by Tucker, detailing the difficulties of instituting 'inclusive club culture' within Yorkshire Sunday League football; Totten's social history of the Leeds-based socialist club Republica Internationale FC; McMahon and Simpson's reflections on the 'non-anarchist' anarchism of Bristol's Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls; and Kuhn and Dolk's case study on the formation of a multi-gender football club, 17 SK in Stockholm. Kuhn's exhaustive study of 'Soccer vs the State' (2011) includes cursory descriptions of the club case studies I will now survey. However, it was not until this 'special issue' that extensive player-authored accounts received wider academic attention in the UK.

⁶ This is equally important given that the nascent activist-athlete research paradigm (as identified by Boykoff (2016, 2020), is largely based on elite and professional practitioners

Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls FC

Since 2011, there have been a number of studies into the activities of the Bristol-based alternative sports club Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls. Wilson's initial publication about Easton charts the establishment of the alternative football club in the early 1990s which offered (for those involved) a crucial space to explore how "radical ideas such as autonomy, democracy, free social spaces and internationalism can be practically developed outside of the constraints of formal and explicit political activity" (in Kuhn 2011: 185). The uncompromising non-hierarchical nature of the clubs approach to football meant players "refused the role of moral preachers; instead we talked to other teams with our banter and our boots" (2011: 185). Although this non-didactic political approach is not expanded upon by the author, his study brings to light the difficulties alternative football clubs encounter in re orienting the ethos of play in football away from the 'win at all costs' mentality which pervades competitive two-sided football. Equally, the study points to the complex politics involved in balancing inclusion and sporting excellence through an alternative football club primarily formed to create networks of solidarity and community.

A number of peer reviewed auto-ethnographies and social histories by current and former players have subsequently detailed how 'activism *through* football' at Easton has led to tangible changes in the world (see Simpson and McMahon, 2012; Simpson, 2015). Simpson's (2016) 'Anatomy of an Alternative Sports club' offers further insight into the impacts of Easton's political initiatives which have been run by current and former players. This has included the raising of over £100,000 for *Kiptik*, a Zapatista-led partnership to secure clean water in the Chiapas region of Mexico. The player-author's immersion in the minutiae of Easton club culture also gives a first-hand account of the complexities of the nascent sporting democracy at Easton and the emergent forms of community activism found there. Also, of the internal critiques within the club membership in the wake of tours of Palestine. Although Simpson argues Easton's biggest achievement has been to create a sense of 'participatory community', this is left loosely defined (and without theoretical grounding). This term therefore includes a broad spectrum from local political campaigning, housing and

supporting asylum seekers, drinking at the local Jamaican pub, through to raising funds for a former player's cancer charity.

As community activist scholar, Ledwith, contends, "it is impossible to 'be critical' without situating ourselves within the lives of those with whom we research in socio-cultural-political times." (2007: 605) In this regard, despite the practical and embodied experiences found in the player-author accounts of Easton, we are still left to question what the researcher's positions are in relation to the wider membership of the club. Equally, how experiences of activism may differ for its playing members aside from the prominent voices included in the studies. In order to obtain a more 'anatomical' player survey it is therefore necessary to find out what is invested in the club by other players, on their own terms.

A lack of distance between author and research can lead to an 'over-rapport' with the research subject (as identified within critiques of Guilianotti and Armstrong's ethnographic work into football hooliganism on the terraces of Scottish football in the 1990s (see Free, Inglis & Hughson, 2005). This lack of critical distance, and an over-affiliation with the actions of a group can lead to omissions of typical events which have become normalized within the social group (MacPhail, 2004; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). This is a divot within which existing studies into Easton also fall. These accounts fail to 'make strange' or critique the alternative football clubs social initiatives which are the object of research. The descriptive narratives of such studies into Easton therefore may offer an accessible, journalistic entry point, however, they do little to assuage images of the heroic or intrepid masculinist authorial voice. Equally, the lack of rigorous theoretical grounding and the failure to consider how football may limit the forms of political solidarity engendered, are crucial omissions from current research into the club.

Republica Internationale FC

Alongside Easton, there are a number of player authored studies about Republica Internationale FC. This is an explicitly 'Socialist Football club' founded in Leeds in the early 1980s. It was also formed as an escape from the strictures of formal political activism. Indicative of the developing networks between alternative political football clubs in Europe they joined Easton on a number of political solidarity tours. Also, they helped to stage alternative football tournaments through the 'Freedom Through Football' network in the mid-2000s (Totten, 2011).

Taking a more top-down approach to club ethos and outlook than Easton, Republica accept members based solely on an adherence to a 'socialist club manifesto'. They also organised voluntary community work through the club and for a short while produced an associated fanzine. Through the lived experiences of Republica players past and present, key questions are asked in this research about the long term sustainability of fostering an inclusive socialist football club in the UK. Also how alternative clubs have to contend with a widening player group and the fluctuating commitment to the club ethos of 'left wing political solidarity'. Totten's social history of Republica therefore further enhances our understandings of the travails and political machinations required in sustaining and developing an alternative football club as it 'loosens' from its original cultural context and membership (2015).

Utilising Ledwith's concept of 'critical living praxis', Republica (and its affiliated network of clubs), it is argued, provides a 'practical education' of what 'socialism through football' can mean in the 21st century for players and the community. Key to such efforts at 'practical education', Totten details how many players struggled to contend with internal tensions relating to racism and the hyper competitive atmosphere in the local league structure. Equally, the difficulties in providing inclusive spaces for new players with intersectional identities within normative amateur football contexts. This points to the need for further analysis into such difficulties which will also be covered in my discussion of 3SF.

Tucker's (2015) later research offers a valuable comparative study which is based upon his decade of playing experiences with Republica and also the attempts made by the author to replicate this alternative club culture in the context of Tee side amateur football. Here, he augments Totten's study to suggest that 'socialist sporting culture' is one found in the everyday, where theory is confronted with, and augmented by, everyday practices and social mores. This aligns with Totten's longitudinal study into the fan activism and 'political praxis' found at the Hamburg-based alternative club Sainkt Pauli. In this work he argues fans have been able to engender a distinct form of 'participatory democracy' through an outlier professional football club (2015). However, despite the analytical strengths of the ethnographic research into Sainkt Pauli, in the case of Republica FC and 'Teeside Reds', both authors fail to include the voices of other players to understand their 'democratic' or 'political actions' on their own terms.

I address this omission in my work by privileging the voices of the 3SF community and offering the opportunity for players to articulate what 3SF means on their own terms. As Tucker and Totten's (1994, 2006, 2012) further collaborative studies into wider community-sport development projects show, critical activist-researchers with their long term commitment to both praxis and production of knowledge have a responsibility to challenge the overwhelmingly positive reports of creating inclusive spaces and networks of solidarity through alternative football clubs. Therefore, whilst advocating for the importance of the 'Freedom Through Football' initiatives (which provide a safe space for those excluded and victimised in mainstream sporting contexts), the strength of the above authors work is found in efforts to complicate (at least to a small degree) hagiographical androcentric analyses which fail to acknowledge the demographic homogeneity within alternative football movements (see Cauldwell, 2011).

Of Cowboys and Critique

For fellow activist-researchers Dolk and Kuhn, "clubs such as the Cowboys should not be judged on their ability to achieve 'political objectives' but in their capability to put radical

ideas into practice and act as conduits for their spread both locally and globally” (2015: 444). The above player studies surveyed, in this regard, undoubtedly offer examples of how DIY-football has fostered and nurtured ‘left wing’ playing communities away from formal political and sporting contexts in the UK. They also show how football can provide a ‘practical education’ for players in the latent discriminatory nature of competitive two sided football. Also the difficulties experienced in balancing inclusion and competition in these alternative playing contexts. These singular alternative club case studies therefore show the power of direct action in sport over abstracted theories for social change.

However, there is a need to further detail the intricacies and contradictions which constitute such societal alternatives. Also, to account for the plurality of voices who shape these clubs. This addition within my research will help to understand how football is experienced in these alternative contexts beyond broad and ill-defined concepts of ‘solidarity’ and ‘comradeship’. We should remember that each player may not feel the same as those who feel empowered enough (or have accrued sufficient ‘football capital’) to write or speak authoritatively about theirs and other people’s experiences. Also, that the plurality of ‘excessive players’ voices may demonstrate the contested or fragmented nature of cultural projects seeking to engender social, cultural and political transformation from below.

In summary, according to the existing player authored literature, alternative contexts within which to play two-sided football offer a distinct mode of ‘freedom’ for players to engage, subvert and question the world. They also provide ‘seismographic readings’ of wider social tendencies which act as a tool for practical action. However, as Bott (in Kuhn, 2011: 147) suggests, it is also important to recognise how these liberatory experiences, both quotidian and liminal, offer forms of ‘ersatz freedom’, at once limited and stymied by inherited practices and structures of modern sport. As such, my research considers how alternative clubs may have transformed the cultural contexts in which the game is played but have not dealt with the oppressive binary nature of competitive sport itself. This may continue to exclude and restrict membership.

As Ledwith contends “a theory of liberation that glosses over divisions in society, attempting to universalise experiences shaped by gender, ‘race’, ethnicity, age, faith, sexuality, ‘dis’ ability, entrenches those divisions still further” (2005: 255). With these glossy limitations in body and mind, my research will complicate existing narratives of ‘liberation’ about the alternative soccerscape. It will highlight the ambivalent nature of alternative competitive ‘inclusive’ team sports and their associated hierarchies which may replicate normative sporting environments and prevent participation. In bringing this productive tension and ambivalence to the fore, my research aligns with wider sociological studies that critically question the logic that participation in sport can contribute to inclusive social change per se, or as act as a tool of social cohesion (Kelly, 2011; Long & Sanderson, 2001; Donnelly, Atkinson, Boyle & Szto, 2011; Lyras & Peachey, 2011; Elling, Knoppers & De Knop, 2005; Black, 2010; Coalter, 2015).

As McKay suggests, many authors highlight the rich detail of specific case studies but fail to question the ‘form’ of sporting practice which surrounds these efforts (1992: 117).

Therefore, the following section of this chapter will survey existing studies of projects within the alternative soccerscape which have actively ‘transformed football’ outside of formal institutions, pedagogical frameworks and top-down sporting organisations.

‘Alternative’ Football World Cups

There are a number of ‘alternative’ ‘World Cups’ and tournaments which actively foster inclusive cultural contexts for players and fans to come together around amateur football. These include the Homeless World Cup, Balon Mondiale, the Amsterdam World Cup, CONIFA Football Cup (see Burdsey, 2008; Rockwood, 2020), Football4Hope Community Football Days and FURD affiliated events (see Stone, 2020). Existing scholarship has thus far looked at these alternative football tournaments from an events management perspective, and to highlight wider efforts at nurturing spaces of inclusivity and representation within football culture (see Gannett, Kaufman, Clark & McGarvey, 2014; Long, Pantaleon & Bruant,

2006; Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012). However, there is much work to be done with regards to analysis of the potential lasting impacts of such events.

Whilst these alternative football tournaments may create 'multifocal' events focussing on messages of peace, reconciliation and community cohesion they also largely replicate the hierarchies and binary configurations of mainstream sporting practice. These include knockout formats which privilege achievement and quantifiable results. There are, however, a select number of alternative tournaments within the 'anarchist football network' which play augmented forms of football (including the staging of showcase 3SF events). These include the *Mondiali Anti Razzissti* or 'Anti-Racist World Cup', Dynamo Windrad FC's 'Alternative Cup', Republica's 'The Flying Circus' and St Pauli's 'AntiRa' Cup. In these 'alternative' contexts (and in order to foster atmospheres of sporting inclusion, political solidarity and anti-racism) teams may be randomised, rules, hierarchies and structures subverted, and the goals of football play re oriented towards comradeship, reciprocity and fun (Kuhn, 2011; Totten, 2016). But a key question remains as to how these games are experienced.

For Totten, playing in these alternative football events "is a process of education for those who participate...it engenders a critical consciousness which is then acted upon as a form of critical praxis" (2011: 165). However, I believe it pertinent to interrogate further what forms of 'critical consciousness' or 'praxis' are engendered and experienced on the field of play and how long they may last. Also, what the perceived outcomes are for players without a prescriptive dogma to adhere to after such events? My project therefore seeks to discover through 3SF and its associated alternative World Cup tournaments whether the 'excessive players' involved find the normative spaces, structures and forms of mainstream football as irreconcilable with their revolutionary agendas and longer term sporting aims. Also, whether the opportunities to collectively transform football are in fact transient moments of experimentation without lasting impact.

Liminality

In seeking to answer similar questions as those detailed above, Sterchele and Saint-Blancat's (2015) ethnography of the *Mondiali Antirazzisti* in Modena offers a significant study which details excessive-player experiences at an alternative football tournament.⁷ Described by its founder as 'a social forum for sports...where ideas of social change can be developed through participation' (Balestri in Kuhn, 2011: 146) the *Mondiali* has evolved over the last two decades through feedback from participating alternative football clubs, ultra-fan groups, migrant teams and political activists who also shape the event format and content. In analogous ways to the recent evolution of the London based 3SF league, the *Mondiali* has introduced 'desportized' initiatives to temper sporting competition. This has included mixed gender pick-up teams, self-refereeing, penalty shootout matches (instituted from the quarter-finals onwards), and the award of multiple prizes for clubs' commitment to social causes and anti-racist initiatives rather than athletic endeavour or sporting excellence.⁸

Through the author's extensive interviews and field observations (gathered over the course of a seven-year study), Saint-Blancat and Sterchele align with Numerato to show how alternative 'intercultural football festivals' offer a 'reflexive' site for players to question received forms and logics of competitive football. Their analysis includes interviews with players on the difficulties of bringing together such a diverse group of football activists. Also, how altering the competitive structures of football has provided various challenges to players' previous expectations of playing sport. These are key themes which I explore in understanding the recent 'reformed' or 'desportized' trajectory of 3SF. Also, how playing the game confronts similar existential issues of doxic sporting competition and structure.

⁷ There is much value in placing this specific tournament within the wider cultural context of municipal funding policies opportunity to promote 'sport for all' in Modena and the Regio-Emiglia region and the lineage of networks between ultra-fan groups and the European anti-racist movement (see Ruzzo 2008: Harvey, Safia et al 2009).

Utilising Turners definition of liminality as “a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes.” (1979: 465) and therefore as a site of ‘radical possibility’, Sterchele and Saint-Blancat further detail how the ‘anti-structure’ of the *Mondiali* provides a transient site to transform football along the continuum of sport-games-play. They explain further how “de-structured sports practices enable participants to experience bodily movements and technical moves as a pleasure per se rather than instrumentally oriented to the achievement of whatever goal” (2015: 118). This ‘desportized’ transformation of football blurs the distinctions of achievement, inclusion, celebration, solidarity and enjoyment. The effects of such transformations in 3SF will be explored further in Chapter 5 through the use of Eichberg’s triolectic of sports model.

Considering the dearth of academic studies into DIY projects which are actively reshaping the practice of football, my research is necessarily a response to Sterchele’s call for specific socio-cultural analysis of ‘de-sportized’ football in such quotidian contexts (2015). In this regard, my project further questions what players are confronted with whilst playing a new form of the game. Moreover, if such embodied experiences have led to any wider forms of ‘critical consciousness’ or practical action. Further to this, my research into 3SF will ask what the ‘afterlives’ of such alternative sporting practices are beyond the liminal moments of play and spectacular one-off events.

‘Desportization’

Through the collective development of an alternative inclusive form of football in 3SF, a process of ‘desportization’ has occurred.⁹ This amorphous term is defined by Green as “the (deliberate) loosening of rationalised and boundary-making sports forms in favour of more playful and inclusive configurations” (Green, 1997:37). The term has been liberally applied to wider socio-sporting trends which promote inclusivity and non-violent approaches to

⁹ Concerted efforts have long existed to counter the hyper competition and achievement-orientation found within modern sports practice, from the *Proletkult* propulsions of the Soviet Union through to the inclusion of Parkour in PE lessons at school (see Riordan, 1980; Guttman, 1994; Eichberg, 1998 et al).

martial arts (Sanchez-Garcia & Malcolm, 2010; Van Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2006); it has also been used in the study of resistance to encroaching formalisation and codification in lifestyle and extreme sports (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011; Thorpe & Rinehart, 2013; Wheaton 2013); also to the re-emergence and adaptation of folk/traditional games in schools (Malcolm, 2005; Stokvis, 1992; DeKoven, 2005). 'Desportization' has further been identified within the 'deliberate' establishment of a number of mixed-gender team sports over the last three decades, including Intercrosse, Tchoukball, Touch Rugby, and Korfbal (see Costantinou, 2010; VanBottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011). Third-sector and sport-for-development initiatives have also utilised various forms of 'desportized' football. Further, whether alternative forms of football can still be considered 'sport', 'games', 'play', or even 'Sport+', in their augmented state is something which has concerned wider scholarship (see J. Rockwell & Palmer 2011; Sterchele, 2011).

Setting these debates around sporting taxonomy aside, my research will ask whether what Green terms 'the deliberate loosening' found within 'desportized' 3SF marks a distinct philosophical and reflexive position about modern competitive team sport for the players involved? Also what have been the effects of such reforms in the sport?

Despite the wider prevalence of case studies of 'desportization', Sterchele (2015) usefully identifies four common features of contemporary 'desportization' which may also apply to the alternative soccerscape. These are the presence of 'multi-focality' (the plurality of events such as film screenings, seminars, art exhibitions and music events which are staged alongside sports), an overlapping of spectators and players in and around the field of play, the downplaying of competitiveness, and the creation of mixed ability/gender teams. Utilising this framework to assess recent reforms to 3SF in London (alongside associated concepts of 'hegemonic' and 'inclusive' masculinity), I hope to contribute to understandings of wider trends of 'desportization' in alternative football and how these are negotiated in everyday settings.

That football may need to be ‘de-sportized’ in order to foster transformational solidarity, sociability and inclusion, “tells us about the limits of this specific configuration and cultural form of bodily practice and social relations in breaking down barriers and addressing social issues” (Sterchele, 2015:197). Further to this contention, it is important for my research to explore how players perceive the limits of mainstream sport, given the need for an alternative. This line of inquiry forces us to consider further the exclusory symbolic violence of competitive sport and the obscure nature of resistance to such sporting capital. These issues will be expanded upon in my second literature review chapter with Bourdieu and Lefebvre.

Ludus vs Paida? Ritual vs Record? Old Questions New Ethnographic Contexts.

3SF is not immune from the ‘ontological uncertainty’ detailed at the beginning of this review chapter. However, in addition to this ambivalence, over the last three decades, the game has also been undergoing a process of what could be described as ‘sportization’ and ‘desportization’. As previously detailed, the term ‘sportization’ is most commonly attributed to the work of Elias and Dunning, whose pioneering *longue duree* studies sought to understand how games developed from pastime to sport in modern culture. However, I use it in a broader sense to understand what Guttmann could describe as 3SF’s development ‘from ritual to record’. With this process in body and mind, my research will consider how the game has been taken by players on as a popular sporting practice and replicated many of the ‘achievement-oriented’ values and codified structures of competitive sport (Guttmann, 2004). Concurrently, it will study how various consensual and reflexive reforms have also been made by players in order to temper or ‘desportize’ the game. As further detailed in the following chapter, it will show the agencies and pre-existing structures which have shaped these events.

Further to this analytic focus on agency and structure, my research will detail 3SF as a cultural practice through which to question the productive capacities of Caillois’ (1962) classic notions of ‘Ludic’ and ‘Paidic’ play. In this sense, it will consider the inherent

'tensions' between the meanings and values found in 'Ludus', (or the constraints based, rule bound, outcome oriented sports practice) and 'Paidia', (as spontaneous, improvised and exploratory play). Pivoting around this tension in 3SF, my research will argue how both forms of 'excessive play' offer different forms of practical and impractical consciousness in the game. Also, my research will consider how re-configurations of play may also be demotivating and exclusionary (Carless, Peacock, McKenna & Cooke, 2013; Green, 1997; Grezzani, 2013; Richards, 1997; Sherry, 2010)

Expanded in this way, my research argues for 3SF to be understood as a distinct form of 'desportized' in the alternative soccerscape. As such, I will balance a quantifiable outcome-oriented approach to ludic play alongside a more experiential analysis of the informal political contexts of paidic play in 3SF.

Conclusion

This chapter has grounded my analysis of 3SF within the bounds (and literature) of the alternative soccerscape. It showed how alternative engagements with football have led to distinct forms of political praxis, grass-roots community organising and DIY communitarianism. Further, it identified a dearth of player-centric studies and problematized the methodological approaches employed thus far in the field. Lastly, it considered the liminal sites of possibility engendered by 'desportized' forms of football. However, in order to do justice to the complexity of 3SF as a cultural practice, it is important to contextualise the game beyond the soccerscape. 3SF marks itself as unique in this regard, given that it developed from a free-form, anarchic and improvised form of creative play and pataphysical philosophy. It is an activity which is undeniably on the outer limits of sporting epistemology and therefore should be analysed as such.

With this outlier status in mind and body, the following review chapter (utilising the work of Bourdieu and Lefebvre) will begin by developing a theoretical framework through which to

analyse potential resistance found within 3SF. Next, and considering Critcher's strident suggestion that, "the only way to reform sport is to convert it into something else that ceases to be sport", (1986: 342) the chapter 'situates' 3SF within the 'anarcho-politics of leisure' and the revolutionary program of the Situationist International.

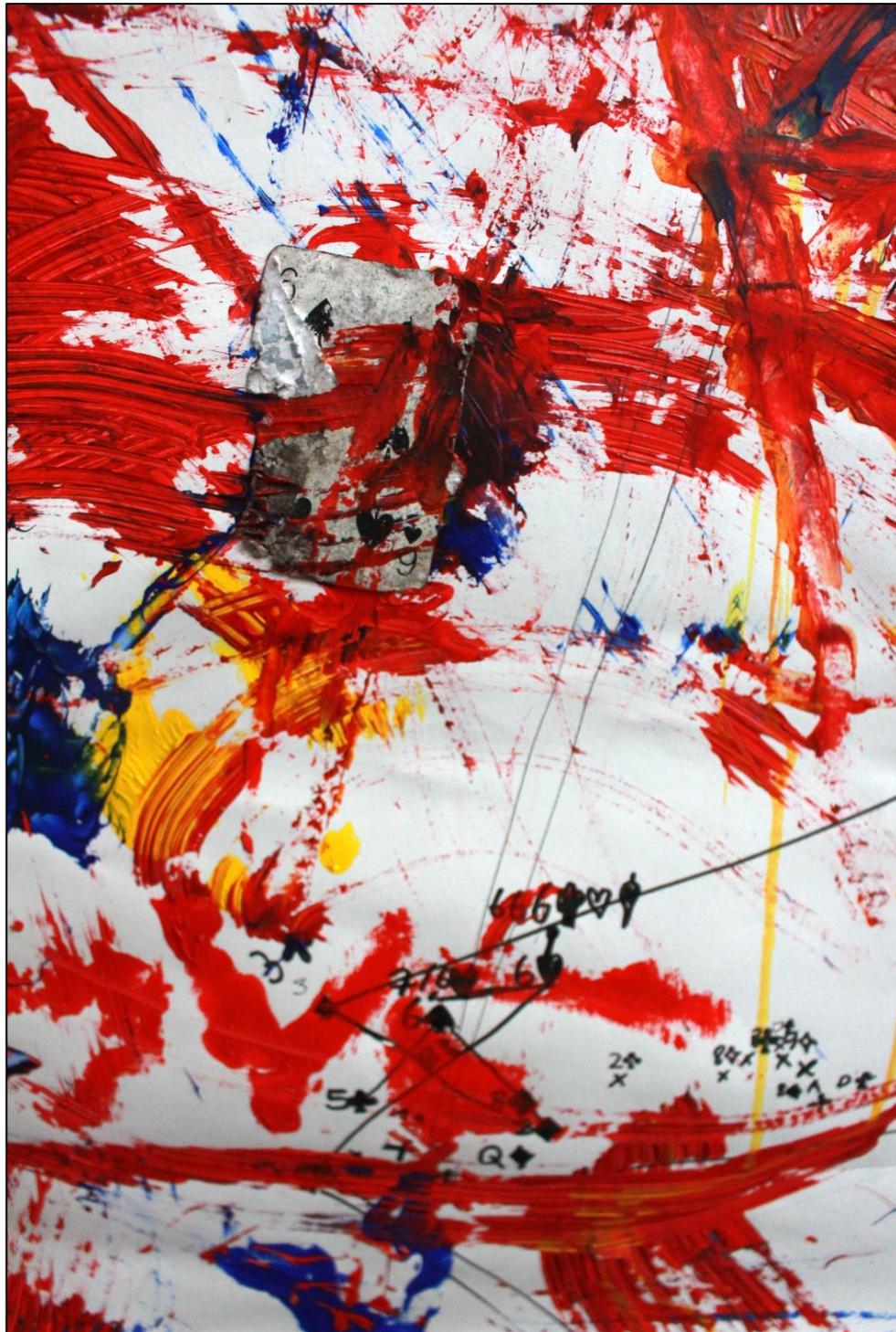


Figure 11. Chromo-dynamic 3SF Poster November 2018 (Personal Collection)

Chapter 2.

The Production of Space, Situationism and Creative Activism

Introduction

As detailed in Chapter 1, football is currently experiencing a period of ‘revolutionary’ upheaval. Football fans, clubs, businesses and players are each negotiating distinct ‘philosophies’ as to what sport means, how it is practiced, and what its potential social use in contemporary culture can be (Numerato, 2019). In this regard, ‘desportized’ alternative ‘World Cups’, provide opportunities for excessive players to temporarily transform the structures and values associated with competitive two sided football. Similarly, networks of ‘autonomous’ alternative clubs (such as Easton and Republica) provide more quotidian contexts within which players are able to question received sporting logics, practices and hierarchies.

When considering the wider sociological significance of such movements key research questions arise as to how these alternative sporting contexts are experienced by players and what meaning is given to such actions. This leads us to further consider wider philosophical questions as to what is at stake when we collectively develop societal alternatives (sporting or otherwise)? In what service are such activities and their associated bodies instrumentalised? Also, what values and meanings are placed upon these acts, and how do these differ across the social field?

For Bourdieu, “the appearance of a new sport or a new way of practising an already established sport causes a restructuring of the space of sporting practices and a more or less complete redefinition of the meaning attached to the various practices” (1978: 362). With

this transformative proposition in body and mind, Chapter 2 will build a framework through which to consider the existential questions which are being asked within 3SF as to what constitutes a legitimate 'sport' and who can be included in its practice.

This review chapter begins by asking how 3SF players may experience a sport which breaks the habits and 'symbolic structures' of modern sports practice. Utilising Bourdieu further, it then defines the fragmented social field of 3SF as a site where "what is at stake, inter alia, is the monopolistic capacity to impose the legitimate definition of sporting practices and the legitimate function of sporting activity" (1978: 826). Following on from the 'struggle over definition' in 3SF, I develop (with Lefebvre) a suitably triadic theoretical paradigm to study the complex interplay of individual agency and its relationship to structural hegemony in the 'production' of space within the alternative soccerscape. Next, I place 3SF within the wider cultural context of the SI; a group closely allied to Lefebvre, and one which developed a distinct Marxist program in pursuit of a 'revolution of everyday life'. Lastly, I ground 3SF within existing scholarship on 'neo-situationism' and 'the anarcho-politics of leisure'. In doing so, I draw comparisons with other forms of 'creative activism' which have utilised sport in transformative, absurd and unorthodox ways.

Social Fields and a New Sporting Gaze?

For the 'excessive' players of 3SF, the struggle over what constitutes or defines a 'legitimate' form (or practice) of sport is not limited to material spaces and fields of play. It is also "a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place" (Jenkins, 1992: 84).

Therefore, it remains important in my research to consider how 3SF players' eclectic definitions, bodily approaches, and divergent experiences, may be a crucial site through which alternative perceptions of the world would otherwise remain inaccessible. In this regard, my research seeks to discover what 'manoeuvres' are found within the social field of 3SF. Moreover, whether 3SF players experience what Bourdieu has called a 'metanoia', or a 'new gaze' on the world, through the game (Grenfell, 2010).

Thorpe's work on the contestations which have surrounded the development of snowboarding - from an 'extreme' counter cultural activity through to an institutionalised and 'drug-free' Olympic showcase event - outlines how the social field of snowboarding is a highly fragmented and structured system of social positions, comprised of a number of social groups who all give value to the practice in different ways (2011: 141). This analysis can also be productively applied to the recent struggle over legitimacy and form within 3SF. Therefore, my project will show the social field of 3SF as comprised of multiple, intersecting and hierarchically positioned fields (of individuals and groups), which have been established and contested *over* time, *through* bodies, and *in* space.

In the constitution of a 'social field', Bourdieu rightly questions 'what are the mental structures through which social actors apprehend social worlds' (1997: 15). Further to this, I will explore the difficulties and tensions encountered by 3SF players attempting to re-imagine sporting space, bodily practices and (as a consequence), social relations beyond the pre-existing structures available to them.

Pre-existing (and established) competitive team sports and the spaces within which they occur (both mental and physical) can be understood to have their own 'self-evident' logics of practice and particular world of norms, regulations and values. These 'doxic modalities' guide bodies through sporting spaces and give cultural meaning to the embodied actions therein. With this thought in mind and body, my research (with Bourdieu) considers what the deliberate reconfigurations of those discrete and coded worlds in 3SF do to the experiences of those involved in the play. Put another way, my research seeks to understand how transforming the 'doxic logic' of football challenges the mental structures of players and their 'bodily dispositions'. It questions what new habits or perspectives are formed from such actions. Also, how these are made sense of.

For Bourdieu, the ‘doxic’ logics of sporting practice (such as that found in football in scoring goals against an opposition team and passing only to your own team) treat the body as ‘living memory’ (1977). This offers a useful paradigm to also ask in my research what ‘living memories’ are created for the playing bodies of 3SF? Also, what are the ‘afterlives’ of such memories?¹⁰ (see Chapter 7)

Symbolic Capital and Cultural Reproduction in 3SF

When players of 3SF impose a cultural meaning upon the social field, which in turn becomes accepted, bolstered or legitimised as a self-evident (doxic) practice in the wider milieu (such as that of codification or the establishment of the normative hierarchies of competitive sporting contests), then a key research question emerges about how that act of enclosure is experienced by those involved? In this regard, my first analysis chapter will critically ask who is excluded by such impositions. Also, what this can tell us about the interplay between individual agency and symbolic structures in contemporary football activism.

Through the ‘symbolic’ order which permeates the social (and sporting) world around us, “we internalise social structures and develop particularised perceptions of the world...it is these subconscious schemes of perception that give meaning to, and produce, particular ways of doing things.” (Cresswell, 2002: 122) This is a crucial consideration for my research in asking the extent to which it has been possible to reach beyond sporting ‘schemes of perception’ and to transform football through 3SF? Also what inherent difficulties are found within social practices attempting to reach beyond such pre-existing structures and cultural practices?

With reference to the ways in which 3SFers have unconsciously replicated the hierarchies’ and structures of its two-sided sporting cousin, (such as at Triball and the 2014 and 2017

¹⁰ My embodied experiences as player-researcher within the game have been key in shaping this line of enquiry in my research

World Cup tournaments), I will apply Bourdieu's notion of 'symbolic capital' to my analysis. In particular, this will ask what unseen, symbolic structures govern how player activist projects in the soccerscape develop. Such symbolic mutually constitutive power structures are described (in relation to the subtle reproductions of inequality in the French secondary education system) by Bourdieu and Passeron (1978) as "a gentle violence imperceptible and invisible even to its victims." This 'gentle violence' can take many forms, and a key task of my research will be to uncover where these forms are located in 3SF.

3SF as Disjuncture?

In my analysis of the failure of 3SF to reach beyond pre-existing sporting logics and structures, it is important to consider how alternative 'body cultures' frequently re-produce such forms as popular cultural practices. In this regard, my research aligns with a wider body of literature on 'lifestyle sports' in their exploration of how the hierarchies and structures of received sporting practices affects the form, visibility and 'play' of emergent (and alternative) practices (see Borden, 2019; Dupont, 2014; Walters, 2008; Wheaton, 2013). Through interviews with participants from across the social field, I will build upon such studies to assess whether 3SF offers a moment of sporting 'crisis' (Bourdieu, 1977: 226); (as one which temporarily challenges the doxic modality of sporting space and the bodily habitus of football, but ultimately does not transform participants material social conditions) or, if 3SF radically redefines participants relationships to the world through a triolectic form of football.

My research will also consider how 3SF, in its concurrent rejection of orthodox forms of political activism and replication of received sporting practices, offers multiple forms of 'disjuncture' or forms of 'hysteresis'. For Bourdieu 'hysteresis' is the 'disjuncture' between 'habitus' and 'environment', between an outdated cultural form and a new bodily practice. This disjuncture could leave social actors feeling like a "fish out of water," or, with "a set of expectations, values, beliefs, dispositions, and bodily comporments that are no longer

reflected in the imperatives of the surrounding context” (Dumenden & English, 2013: 1082). In seeking to analyse such ‘disjunctive’ experiences in the game, my research questions how participants perceive and experience 3SF on their own terms. Also what physical and mental challenges may be brought up in the act of playing ‘desportized’ football.

Limits of Bourdieu

Bourdieu has been criticised for a failure to consider the capacity for individuals to challenge the sporting order, in practice or governance (see Goodger 1982; Gruneau, 1993; Mansfield, 2000; Therberge, 1991). Notably, Hargreaves argues that Bourdieu’s culturally determinist conceptual work “tends to treat people as if they are properties of the system and fails to appreciate how cultural fields, such as sports, contain the capacity for people/women to resist and change social/gender relations” (1994: 21). Whilst this undoubtedly limits certain critical applications of his work, my project aligns with that of Smith, Hunter and emerald (2014) which offers a re-appraisal of the French theorist’s contribution to the Sociology of Sport. This brings to the fore Bourdieu’s emphasis on the ‘partial autonomy’ (and therefore agency) of social actors (see also Brown, 2005; Gorely, Holroyd & Kirk, 2003; Light & Kirk 2000; Mahar, 1990).

Given that Bourdieu’s focus was on practice not as separate from theory but something which could be re-applied in a reflexive cycle, then I further contend in my research how the application of his concepts of ‘symbolic capital’, ‘doxa’, ‘crisis’ and ‘hysteresis’ to 3SF enriches the potential of theory itself; revealing the dynamic interplay between practical research and theory, between structure and autonomous agency, and between those seeking both ‘ludic’ and ‘paidic’ experiences of play (emerald, 2015: 178).

As Hughson, Free and Inglis suggest, Bourdieu is interested in individuals as agents within the field and they advise the mapping of a ‘social typology’ of the positions occupied by individuals as social agents (2005: 156). In this regard, the task for my research is to chart

such a social typology of agency through 3SF. I will therefore survey how players have been able to shape the game in contrasting and dynamic (if limited) ways.

Lefebvre, 3SF and the Production of Sporting Space

As highlighted above, a *Bourdieuian* analytical approach (when applied to the experiences of playing 3SF) can offer a tool kit to consider alternative football activism as a site of agency (albeit bound within the inherited structures and forms of ‘symbolic capital’ and ‘cultural habitus’). However, it is also necessary to explore how ‘excessive players’ constitute, imagine, appropriate, and collectively *produce* alternative sporting spaces. In this sense, my research will consider how sporting spaces more generally should not be seen as a ‘passive locus of social relations’ (Elden, 2007). Instead, I argue that such spaces should be regarded as a social production; mutually constitutive of a complex of directly-lived experiences, distinct socio-historical circumstances, and received cultural conceptions and practices. Framed in this way, we can begin to analyse the spaces of a wider alternative soccerscape as critical social and political practices within themselves. Also, that these spaces are intimately bound to a complex interrelationship between form, agency and structure.

As a profitable way to analyse this complex (and to explicate the diverse meanings and associations for those involved in 3SF), this chapter will now utilise Lefebvre’s spatial triad of the conceived, perceived, and lived space found in the ‘Production of Space’. Through its application, I will show how alternative engagements with the 3SF can be once ‘a tool in thought’, a site of ‘domination’ and a form of ‘practical action’ (1991: 9).

For Lefebvre, “each society offers up its own peculiar space, as it were, as an object for analysis and overall theoretical explication” (1991: 31). With this contention in mind, body, space and time, my research will interrogate the peculiarity and ontological uncertainty of the spaces of 3SF as a ‘lived practice’. It will also consider what a *Lefebvrian* analysis of the game can tell us about the liminal opportunities it provides as an expressive form of

embodied political critique and a reflexive spatial practice. As such, I will show 3SF as what Lefebvre defines as an 'appropriated' space, away from the normative landscapes of sports practice and political activism; a game that (depending on the context) has its own 'particular centres' and 'polycentrism' .

3SF and Lefebvre's Triad

Lefebvre developed a suitably three-stranded approach to the complex interplay of factors through which space is produced. His triad consists firstly of 'spatial practice'. This is similar to Bourdieu's concept of 'Doxa' in that it presupposes the use and function of space (and the body) based on a number of 'common sense', or 'taken-for-granted' consensual understandings of the use of space in everyday life; constituted by individuals and institutions. He also terms this a 'perceived space', and one which provides social cohesion through the reproduction of spatial forms and practices. These can be found in a sporting context through the use of a football field to play said sport, with the players' actions and movements aligning with a social consensus about expected behaviour and movement in such spaces.

Secondly, Lefebvre identifies 'representations of space' which are connected to the dominant discourses which surround space in society. These are conceptions which produce forms of knowledge about space mediated through systems, signs and codes. This is an abstracted space, a space for architects, engineers and urban planners. It consists of a top down conceptual imagination of what space is for and how it is used. Lefebvre also termed this the 'conceived space', and in sporting environments, could be found in the meticulous design and planning of new stadiums and amateur sports grounds alongside the proposed (and carefully predicted) ways in which bodies may use and interact within such spaces. It could also refer directly to 3SF's origin as an abstracted conceptual model to demonstrate Jorn's notion of trilectics.

Thirdly, and most relevant for this study, are what Lefebvre term 'spaces of representation'. These are the directly lived spaces of 'users and inhabitants'. For him, they are a productive site of struggle (against capitalist domination), and a space where alternative political imaginations are brought into the material world. Beyond the abstract projections of the 'conceived space', and the received functions and behavioural norms of the 'perceived space', 'the lived space' is a fluid, generative and ambiguous place; a site of creativity, agency, opposition and opportunity. It is also what Lefebvre terms as an 'appropriated space', one which seeks to create new possibilities in the everyday. Further, it is a space of conflict; restriction and revolutionary fervour.

Later developed through Lefebvre's concept of the sublime 'moment', it is within 'the lived space' that the possibility to realise change occurs, or, can be uncovered through a lived critique of the everyday (see Rogers, 2002: 144). These lived spaces are what Eichberg later describes as an 'underground' sporting space (1998: 153), where he also imagines a radical form of sport akin to 3SF where 'dancing Marxism meets ball playing Situationism' (2016: 406). The links that can be made between 'ball playing' and 'Marxism' will be drawn out subsequently, however, in our understandings of 3SF I believe we should recognise how 'underground' transformative football projects are realised in the 'fully lived space'. These spaces are constitutive of and shaped by perceived and conceived spaces. In charting 3SF's realisation from a 'conceived' space, through to a lived practice - with all of its contradictions and contestations - I find this triad an apposite model through which to assess the game further in my project.

In order to consider the interplay between structure and agency, for Lefebvre, it was within 'spaces of representation' or 'lived spaces' that 'culture' intervenes in the 'excessive energies' or unproductive actions of the body (see Simonsen, 2005: 282). Such cultural 'interventions' inevitably shape how these 'practical actions' develop based on the two other spaces in this triolectic approach. This consideration is key for my analysis of the wider social life of 3SF detailed in Chapter 7, as it has been appropriated within wider artistic and sporting discourses over the last decade. Questions arise in this context as to whether the

codification and reproduction of sporting values in 3SF can therefore be defined as culture 'intervening' on the intentionally 'unproductive' early games staged by the London Psychogeographical Association and the Association of Autonomous Astronauts? Also, how this 'intervention' can best be assessed and analysed?

The triolectic relationship (outlined above) between perceived, lived and conceived spaces "loses all force if treated as an abstracted model" (Lefebvre, 1991: 47). Therefore, my project will privilege how participants make sense of (and narrativise) their experiences of 3SF during what Day describes as 'the 'politics of the act' (2005). In this sense, I contend that away from the literary fictions developed about the game, it is the 'act' of 3SF which offers a site of 'practical action' for participants (Lefebvre, 1991: 31). Here, in the words of Lefebvre, "only the act can hold together such fragments in a homogenous totality. Only action can prevent dispersion, like a fist clenched around sand" (1991: 416). Through an 'action-oriented' analysis, my research will therefore show 3SF as indicative of the complex social lives of DIY societal alternatives. This is a position which returns us to the acknowledgment of the fragile 'coalitions' (Tarrow, 2011) who collectively produce the 'lived spaces' of football activism.

3SF and the 'Excessive Body'

Whether participants consider 3SF to be a political intervention against capitalist culture or a way to appropriate existing sporting spaces, each social actor necessarily draws upon a constellation of relationships both symbolic and material to make sense of the activity. In short, I contend that 3SF is at once a physical, mental and social phenomenon. Therefore, my research needs to account for the complex and divergent meanings drawn from such constellations. Moreover, it also must consider how these meanings are articulated and experienced through bodies in space. In this regard, I believe that the literal movements, interactions, and bodily gestures of players give meaning to the altered sporting spaces of 3SF. They also offer differing forms of agency, consciousness, resistance and belonging. In

order to test and develop this stance further, my research asks how 3SF is a site of embodied spatial resistance and ‘active struggle’ in the alternative soccerscape. Also how (within the act of play) the body may become an object of political critique as well as an empowered subject.

A limitation within existing literature on ‘social transformationalism’ in DIY football activism is the failure to account for the reflective experiences of the body, playing or otherwise. Through a balance of structural and phenomenological analysis, (outlined further in methodology chapters) I will contribute a framework through which to consider the embodied sites of agency and stricture within DIY societal alternatives which can be applied to the wider field. For now, I return to Lefebvre to detail the importance of the body as a site of resistance in the production of 3SF space.

Body as Mediator

Contra to a wider ‘decorporealisation’ or abstraction of the body from space in Western philosophy, Lefebvre decried the Cartesian logic which ‘betrayed’ ‘abandoned’ and ‘denied’ the body (1991: 407). As a consequence, he sought to bring the body to the fore in drawing together his triadic treatise on the production of space. Following this corporeal contention, my research aligns with a number of *Lefebvorean* scholars who also place the body as a central mediator and ‘critical figure’ between lived, perceived and conceived spaces. This work sees the body as a ‘site of resistance and active struggle’ within the politics of social practice (see Borden, 2000; Blum and Nast, 1996; Elden, 2004; Gregory, 1994; Pile, 1996; Shields, 1998; Merrifield, 2000).

For Simonsen, the “socially lived space depends on material as well as mental constructs – and on the body” (2005: 282). Here, the ‘lived’ strand of Lefebvre’s trilectic, is brought to the fore and augmented. In this sense, I argue that sporting space is contingent on abstracted constructs, behavioural norms and material practice, but is also one that is

written upon the body itself. 3SF is therefore an embodied act experienced fleetingly (and often) in the moment. This is a key consideration in developing new paradigms for understanding practical consciousness in the player activism of the soccerscape.

The centrality of the 'excessive' body (and its associated rhythms) to understandings of 'lived space', for Lefebvre, reveals sites of resistance to the hegemonic order which may remain otherwise overlooked. As he further states, "the body's inventiveness needs no demonstration, for the body itself reveals it, and deploys it in space...always bound to space, such rhythms have to do with needs, which may be dispersed as tendencies, or distilled into desires" (1999: 205). In this regard, my research questions how the excessive playing bodies of 3SF 'reveal themselves' through the act of play. Also, what the active involvement in the rhythms and practices of 3SF says about the 'need' or desire for a new sport, politics or inclusive 'desportized' play?

Players of 3SF necessarily put their bodies on the line and on display in space, often in creative ways. But for what end? My research questions whether the body is used as a political tool in these contexts to transform inter-related political and sporting desires into popular action? In seeking the answers to such questions, I will analyse how 3SF players are able to step beyond the rationality and utility of space in unpredictable and generative ways. Through an explication of the embodied experiences of playing the game on the terms of those involved, I will further inquire into what factors led participants to seek such alternative bodily experiences in the first place. Also, what maintains their social commitment to 3SF based on these liminal experiences?

Resistance in the Alternative Soccerscape

As McDonald contends "sport is often seen to lack the same revolutionary potential of avant-garde art, revolutionary cinema or literature...there is little recognition that sport, like other cultural activities might also be empowering and used as an activity to challenge the

capitalist system” (2009: 45). Such sentiments expose much about the popular discourse (from across political spectrums) which characterises sport as an activity separate from ‘serious’ politics, public life, and other forms of transformative cultural resistance. These attitudes also govern how those involved within such sporting movements may perceive and articulate their actions.

Setting aside the role that sport has played in various revolutionary struggles over the 21st century,¹¹ my research recognises that due to the ways in which sporting spaces are perceived to be ‘outside’ of politics and serious culture, they also provide a liminal space where participants are empowered to ‘make themselves known’ and call for ‘recognition’ (Lefebvre, 1991). With this artificial separation in mind and body, my research will therefore question how 3SF offers a productive and liminal testing ground for players to resist, re-imagine and literally play out societal alternatives due to the perceived triviality of such ‘leisure’ activities. Further to this liminal possibility, I explore whether 3SF may speak to the dearth of cultural contexts through which social actors feel able to realise politics or transformative projects and feel a sense of ‘tangible collectivity’ in ‘neo liberal times’. This will form a key site of inquiry within my interviews with players in both Chapters 6 and 7.

How 3SF is able to nurture different forms of resistance (lasting and liminal) to the alienating consequences of football in ‘neo liberal times’ (and its associated spaces) is complex and manifold. However, my research will critically consider how players efforts to disrupt normative sporting practices (in body and space) are a direct challenge to notions of ‘achievement’, ‘productivity’, ‘competition’, ‘hierarchy’, and ‘use value’, which pervade normative modern sporting practices and wider capitalist society (see Brohm, 1978; Guttmann, 1978; Rigauer, 1982; Paterson, 1985). Further to this, I align with Bale, who argues that ‘the achievement spaces of sport’ (typified within elite professional football) offer a mirror to capitalist ‘alienation’ found in wider society. As he argues, these hyper-commodified, enclosed and heavily-surveilled cultural spaces offer a reflective societal lens which “dislocates fans from the empty symbols presented to them as community assets”

¹¹ See for example Riordan (1980)

(1993: 156). As such, my interviews (in part) focus on 3SF players relationships to 'modern football' and how they perceive the game to be a reflective and embodied reaction to capitalist alienation.

In summary, I contend that the 'lived spaces' of 3SF (and the wider alternative soccerscape) are a profitable site where spatial critiques and embodied actions speak to a number of societal concerns about the atomization of communities and the need for positive collective (and joyful) experiences. In these everyday DIY contexts, I will show how 3SF players and fans have been able to 'redraw the map of the possible', to resist the alienating effects of neo liberalism, and to imagine 'new models of human association' (Unger, 1987: 360).

Beyond the Soccerscape?

How we conceive of space has a 'totemic resonance' in society (Massey, 2005: 47). Sporting spaces and practices - or the active reconstitution of them - are therefore an essential part of analysis in contemporary culture. The demonstrable ability to reclaim, overturn, or create from below, alternative sporting spaces shows how individuals and collectives can intervene into the perceived and conceived spaces of sport and politics in subversive ways. However, it is necessary to adopt a critical stance in understanding how these alternatives only offer forms of 'manageable dissent' if they are not able to fundamentally change the spaces and practices of sport.

As Lefebvre (1991: 59-60) suggested in reference to the failures of the Soviet Constructivists of the 1920s to realise a new world,

A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realised its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself...for a social transformation to

be truly revolutionary in character it must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language, and on space.

This unmet potential described above is a crucial omission from existing studies about the efficacy and lasting contribution of autonomous or DIY football activism. In this regard, my research into 3SF questions if these new contexts and forms of football activism have the ability to 'change life itself' if they continue to be bound to the 'parcelised' spaces demarcated for sport in contemporary culture? Equally, I consider if these transformationalist projects reach beyond the binary and patriarchal bias which pervade capitalist relations and modern sports practice if they maintain or replicate an oppositional and hyper competitive two team system.

At this point it is germane to ask further, what the spaces and bodies of 3SF can tell us about the need to define political spaces and communities from below in contemporary culture? Does playing 3SF in this sense offer a radical site through which to re imagine social relations and urban spaces? Is it a way to dissolve the false separations of sport and politics for those involved? Does it counter the alienating bodily experiences of sport in capitalist culture? Or, is it just a normative sport with three teams?

Expanding upon Lefebvre's calls for a new revolutionary language (and with the above questions in mind) this literature review now reaches beyond the alternative soccerscape in order to understand how 3SF may offer an embodied critical intervention for players "to learn how to produce another city" (Merrifield, 2000: 173) beyond the demarcated, or parcelised zones of urban space.

Comparable ethnographic studies seeking to assess the complex interrelationship between informal and non-specialised spaces of recreation, political activism and sport, have usefully considered how 'extreme' and 'lifestyle sports' such as surfing, kite boarding, parkour, skateboarding and 'ultimate' frisbee relate to (and also are reflective of) a form of counter

cultural politics. These informal political contexts for sport allow participants to both reject the achievement oriented landscapes of modern sports practice and reclaim and disrupt waterside and city spaces in playful and imaginative ways (see Borden, 2000; Griggs, 2009; Thornton, 2011; Wheaton, 2013). Such studies also undoubtedly move us towards a more complex understanding of the ways in which a new wave of inclusive 'body cultures' offer embodied spatial critiques of capitalism, urban space and the values of achievement sport.

Similarly to 3SF, these studies have contended with the potential for such activities to become institutionalized, enclosed and subsumed within formal sporting settings as popular practices (see Wheaton & O'Loughlin, 2017; Sterchele & Camoletto, 2017). However, despite the useful comparisons which can be drawn with existing literature about these activities, it is important to delineate 3SF from these practices due to the games distinct political history within explicitly activist and artistic contexts. These unbound, outlier contexts for 3SF are where this chapter now turns.

3SF and Situationism

The recent emergence of 3SF within the alternative soccerscape speaks to the potential for alternative sporting spaces to provide opportunities for embodied critiques of hyper-commodified football and neo liberal capitalism. However, 3SF also offers a cultural practice which re-appropriates football and its associated symbolic and material spaces in creative, subversive and often transformative ways. In this regard, placing my analysis solely within the paradigm of the soccerscape limits the complex meanings and divergent associations which participants may derive from the game. As such, I now place 3SF within the enduring legacy of Situationism and contemporary political activism in Europe. The following section will provide context to the SI and its associated tactics. It will then consider 3SF as part of a project of playful revolution within 'the anarcho politics of leisure' in London.

The Situationist International

When the recently retired French international midfielder, Raymond Kopa, spoke up in defence of the Footballers Action Committee, (an ad hoc representative body of professional footballers) during the mass protests of 1968, he proudly proclaimed, “united we will make football again what it never ceased to be – the sport of joy, the sport of the world, the sport of tomorrow” (in Vienet, 1992: 132). His political demands and vision for transformative change caught the playful and rebellious counter cultural moment also exemplified by the SI; an artistic and political counter cultural movement that would dissolve amidst bitter disagreement and disillusionment by 1972.

First established in 1957, as a union of various strands of the European avant-garde, the SI were drawn from various experimental art movements including the Letterist International (LI), the IMIB and the LPA. This disparate group of artists, writers, intellectuals, and activists, were each seeking to find viable strategies to at once collapse the false distinctions made between ‘art and life’, disrupt the alienation of modern urban space, reject consumer capitalism; all whilst, decrying the ‘really existing’ socialism of the Soviet Union (Cooper, 2016; Barnard, 2001; Rasmussen & Jakobson, 2015; Wark, 2015).

A key ambition of the SI was articulated in Debord’s seminal text ‘Society of the Spectacle’ (1970). Here, he argued that society was increasingly colonized by mediated images, sounds, films, ideas, and cultural products to create “a world in which the intimate, blithe unscripted and authentic world would eventually be driven out, leaving just a simulacrum of the world” (1970: 38). In much the same way that the Dada movement arose out of the failures of the avant-garde to develop an effective Marxist critique of everyday life in the early 20th century, the SI saw their political role (amidst burgeoning consumerism) to playfully disrupt received cultural forms and spatial practices. This disruption would create revolutionary ‘situations’ which would dance upon the ‘ruins of the modern spectacle’ (Debord, 1994; Schmid, 2008; Wark, 2013; Sadler 1999). Utilising play as its ‘most radical gesture’, the SI

refused to practice politics in orthodox forms or speak to power in an intelligible, rational or formal way (Plant, 2002: 124).

Encapsulated by Vaneigem's poetic treatise 'Revolution of Everyday Life' (1967), the tactics of the SI were not an orthodox call-to-arms through which to overturn the current political system by force or rhetoric. Instead, it was a movement based on the belief that lasting revolution would be found in a critique of everyday life, with play as an absurd revolutionary tactic. Talking after the Nanterre and Sorbonne University student occupation in 1968, and the Paris riots, Vaneigem argued for the efficacy of such playful tactics in confronting authority thus,

The first few days of an insurrection are a walk over simply because nobody pays the slightest bit of attention to the enemy's rules; because they invent a new game and because everyone takes part in its elaboration...the only safeguard against authority and rigidity setting in is a playful attitude. (cited in Plant, 2000: 98)

The 'new games' of the SI included mis-appropriating images and texts from mass media to subvert the messages of consumption with incendiary revolutionary demands. Through such tactics of *detournement* (the appropriation of the familiar in the service of constant revolution) they sought to create 'a semantic field for expressing a new truth' (see Trier, 2019: 170). Also, taking their cues from Baudelaire's concept of the flaneur, (the disinterested wanderer/observer of the city (Tester, 1994), and Chtcheglow's (1953) 'formula of a new urbanism' (which sought to understand how cities effected restrictive modes of behaviour and emotion), 'Psychogeography' became a key tactic employed as a form of embodied radical subversion of the functional and rational ordering of contemporary urban life. Through the overlaying and altering of maps of various cities, experimental guides to urban exploration were borne to counter the social anomie engendered by highly restricted zonal urban planning.

Following the idealist and classicist work of Huizinga (1955), (which bemoaned the ordering and atrophy of 'pure play' within modern modes of creative cultural expression; be that in language, law, maths or games), the SI had a fervent belief in the revolutionary and authentic bodily disposition of Homo-Ludens (or man-at-play). The logic went that in order to be truly liberated, the body needed to harness the power of play to fight authority. Therefore, through the temporary invasion and occupation of the 'functional' and alienating spaces of the city, the aim of the SI was to encourage a total disregard and disdain for culturally mediated spaces designed for structured, (and therefore) alienated forms of leisure, such as sport (Cooper, 2016; Home, 1988; Merrifield, 2000).¹²

For both Lefebvre and the SI there was a need for 'paidic' play within capitalist culture to be contained and controlled within strictly segmented spaces within society, lest it spill into carnivalesque eruptions of joy and antagonism to power (Stevens, 2007; Bunyard, 2017). In order to build a 'new Babylon' (Henyen, 1996), or to reclaim what Lefebvre termed the 'Right to the city' (Butler, 2012), there was a need to refuse such ludic spaces. This entailed the 'convergence' and 'dwelling' within a counter space, in unpredictable and unsanctioned ways.

Lefebvre (1996: 195) saw the capacity to create a sense of ownership denied to those marginalised in the city through such actions. For him the 'right to the city' was

...the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by a discriminatory and segregative organization. This right of the citizen...proclaims the inevitable crisis of city centres based on segregation which reject towards peripheral spaces all those who do not participate in political privileges

¹² Similarly, Lefebvre (their contemporary and some-time intellectual comrade), also saw the prospect of 'demarcated' leisure zones as potentially subversive sites within cities as illusory. Despite a superficial and contradictory appearance of freedom, 'counter-space' and pleasure, such leisure spaces were necessarily an extension of the dominated spaces of capitalism (1991: 387). As he suggested, "the case against leisure is closed – and the verdict irreversible: Leisure is as alienated and alienating as labour" (1991: 383-4).

The ideas and concepts of Lefebvre and the SI (outlined above) offer vital contextual paradigms relevant to the study 3SF. Both champion the transformative and political use of the body for activists in unorthodox ways as a challenge to power and also a form of personal liberation. They also provide a key bridge in my research to consider the enduring legacy of the SI for some 3SF players (as will be explored in Chapter 6), between those who frame the game within political theory and praxis within the 'crisis of capitalism'.

Neo Situationism, 3SF and Creative Activism

However short lived, contradictory and (self) mythologised the SI movement was, and despite the marginal gains achieved by the associated acts of *detournement* and *derive* espoused by a contemporaneous intellectual milieu, various political and artistic groups have continued to take inspiration from such spatialized critiques as a way to confront and challenge power in contemporary culture. From the 1980s 'ArtStrike' movements through to the Psychic Workers Union, DIY activist groups across Europe have attempted to reclaim the city through play and appropriate the visual language of 'the spectacle' (Vague; 2000; Marcus, 2009; Shantz, 2010).

It is here, within the unlikely intersection of the revival of the SI and the beginning of the Premier League that we arrive at the first practical realisations of 3SF in the early 1990s. Placed within this context, the emergence of 3SF begins to take on important critical contextual meanings as a form of material 'creative activism' beyond the soccerscape. In this regard, my research will ask how players still perceive the game to be bound to these contexts and thus experience the action. Also, what relevance Jorn and the SI still has to the game in contemporary culture.

There is extensive literature about what Grindon terms a 'second-wave Situationism' (2009) which was occurring in the late 1980s and early 1990s artistic milieu in Europe. In re-engaging with the texts and practices relating to the SI, these outlier groups sought to reach beyond Debord and explore its lesser known theorists for creative political solutions. These included the translating the work of Jorn, Jorgen Nash, Ralph Rumney and Becker Ho (see Barbrook 2015; Collier, 2015; Home 2016; Rasmussen, 2011). These autonomous groups have been characterised by Bonnett as a reflective of a form of 'radical nostalgia' in Left politics which sought to break away from the strictures of received political action and looked towards the spirit of 68' for its inspiration in the wake of a global neo liberal consensus and lack of viable political alternatives (2012).

Described by St John as "a creative response to the traditional political rituals of the left" (2004: 177), this revivalist phenomenon also saw various autonomous activist groups utilise creative wild-cat takeovers of city space as a form of political protest against supra-national political and economic summits and trade fayres. Utilising various carnivalesque tactics of games, noise, music, humour and play as a form of temporary occupation, intervention and 'ecstatic montage', existing scholarship has detailed such actions by Classwar Games, Plan-C, Medieval Bloc, *Tute Bianche*, Carnival Against Capitalism, Reclaim the Streets, Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, Critical Mass, Global Street Party, and the Wombles (see Barbrook 2015; Bogdad, 2010; Carmo, 2012; Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010; Crouch & Parker, 2003; Pile & Keith, 1997; Tindall & Diani, 2003; St John, 2010; Raparelli, 2011).

Here, in comparable ways to early 3SF interventions, creative activists were able to "navigate the extant political geography of power...via both antagonistic contestation and with the grain, humour based actions" (Featherstone, 2012: 177). This focus on absurdism and humour as a political weapon in 3SF is analysed in Chapter 5. Furthermore, within this 'nostalgic' and absurd activist context, the emergence of 3SF as a lived practice within the political programmes of the LPA, AAA and Luther Blissett Project, can be placed alongside the spectacular and performative nature of other playful political responses and spatial

appropriations framed within both 'Alter-activism' (Juris & Pleyers, 2009; Harvey, Horne & Safai 2009) and 'Protestival' (St John, 2010) movements over the last three decades.

A number of critical geographies have also detailed how playful forms of activism (which utilised the tactics of the SI) were revived within the more sedate everyday practices of walking, urban-exploration, and within a 'spatial turn' in public art over this time. These have been interpreted as a way for individuals to counter the erosion of a wider participatory public sphere in 'neo liberal era' Britain (see Barnard, 2004; Edensor, 2000, 2008; Fokidis, 2007; Grindon, 2008; Loftus, 2009; Mitchell, 2003; Mitchell & Staehelli, 2008; Smith & Low, 2005; Solnit 2014). In this sense 3SF in curatorial contexts takes on further contextual meaning as a spatial political device used to engender public participation in the arts.

Beyond these contexts, wider scholarship has examined how distinct forms of playful 'recreational activism' has provided a site for new forms of political critique in the everyday relevant for my study of 3SF. These studies detail how such informal 'leisure' activities have enabled those involved to disrupt the social regulation of public space and also offer productive and alternative forms of critique or protest away from formalised political contexts. Such projects have been found in the unlikely revolutionary allies of Guerrilla gardening, Silent disco, Yarn Bombing and Guerrilla knitting (see Erickson, 2011; Fariniosi & Fortunati, 2018; Reynolds, 2008; Mackay, 2010; Ziolkowska, 2010; Prain & Moore, 2019).¹³

¹³ The disparate lineage of playful spatial interventions and forms of protest which relate to the early games of 3SF, highlighted above, necessarily speaks to the existential debates which have surrounded Bey (1991) and Bookchin's (1995) work on whether such transient and popular acts of rebellion offer liberatory 'Temporary Autonomous Zones' (TAZ's) - through which participants are able to overturn capitalist relations - or whether they are in fact indicative of an inward and indulgent form of 'Lifestyle Anarchism'; what Eagleton terms 'compliant containable libertarianism' (Eagleton, 2008). Setting aside these well-worn debates, I align with scholarship which argues that the demonstrable turn away from formal politics towards the end of the 20th and early 21st century was a reaction to the failures of the institutions of Left to confront power effectively from within the institutions of parliamentary democracy and as a counter the flagrant excesses of global capitalism (see Bonnet, 2012).

I have detailed a selection of literature above which considers the legacy of SI in popular culture over recent decades, from anarchist groups to yarn bombers. However, my research seeks to contribute to the field in asking what position sport has played if (at all) in these forms of playful activism? Further, whether there are contemporaneous examples of sport being used in political ways to disrupt public space? If so, how have these case studies been approached and what voices have been privileged? Have there been events akin to the anarchist football games staged by the Rage Football Collective outside the 2008 G8 in Toyako Hokkaido (Kuhn, 2011: 222)? Through the words of 3SF players involved I hope to explore whether playing 3SF relates to other creative activist activities (past and present) and the enduring political uses for the game today, notably within recent anti-fascist protests in the UK.

Midnight Cricket and the 'Anarcho-Politics of Leisure'

In seeking to find analogues to 3SF, my research aligns with a small body of studies which bridge the gap between leisure, art and activist research (see Boykoff 2010, 2014; Erickson, 2011; Lenskyi 2000; Stevens 2009). Another key work which draws these disparate theoretical strands together is Ravenscroft and Gilchrist's study into the 'anarcho-politics of leisure' in London (2013). Building upon Rojek's (1999) concept of 'deviant leisure', the authors focus on a group of self-defined 'anarchitects' called Space Hijackers' who played at various forms of neo-situationist sporting critiques across London from 1999 to 2014. Their study is primarily based on a series of 'Midnight Cricket' events which were held by the activist group in the financial districts of Canary Wharf and Bank - attracting interested crowds from those working in the surrounding area.

During these informal 'test matches', the 'Space Hijackers' would enter into humorous anti-capitalist sledging with players. Here, the authors argue that due to the use of 'already established' sport (with what I would frame as an associated 'doxic' modality and semiotic regime) these 'anarchic' cricketers temporarily diverted the spaces, people and buildings

which were bound within the functional propagation of global capital. The games were therefore at once a familiar, inclusive and intelligible cultural form, and also an urban intervention used to disarm authority within highly regulated and policed public space.

In the liminal spaces between sport, game, and political protest the authors further describe how the 'gentleman's' game of cricket in these contexts is,

...deployed as a playful means to de-fetishize the exclusionary infrastructure of urban space...(involving) a wilful transgression of uses for which the urban spaces were designed... making nonlinear connections with the site that would be out of place at other times and in other contexts. (2013: 62)

Acknowledging the contradictory and ambivalent ways in which leisure can offer a site of resistance and 'radical democratic behaviour', Gilchrist and Ravenscroft further argue (with Bey) how public absurdist sporting interventions offer the opportunity to symbolically challenge capitalism through 'acts of territorial knowing'. I will also seek to understand how 3SF offers similar subversions and acts of 'knowing' through 3SF football interventions.

The Space Hijacker's provide a rare comparative case study of a 'detoured' sport which challenges the right to use public spaces in London. This is similar to those who have played 3SF as a form of psychogeographic urban practice. However, a limitation of Gilchrist and Ravenscroft's work is the sole reliance on secondary documentation. Through analysis of the anarchists self-published material, they draw links between parodic sport and Debord (1970), Vaneigem (1972) and Bakhtin (1973). But, the authors did not see or play the game themselves, nor did they interview those involved in the matches. Given the propensity of such groups towards parodic mythopoesis and self-aggrandisement (in line with that of the tactics of SI and the Magico Marxists) this is a problematic research position. In this sense, the author's fail to consider how much is fabricated as a playful form of culture jamming in-itself. Having witnessed similar interactions between members of the 3SF community and

interested cultural mediators such as journalists, broadcasters, curators and writers over the last 4 years playing the game, any theorisation based on secondary material about these neo Situationist games and groups should be treated with extreme caution!

The Counter-Olympics-Network

A notably more grounded study which brings art, sport and creative activism together is Boykoff's work on anti-Olympics activist movements (2014). The author places a number of anti-Olympic protests from Vancouver 2010 and London 2012 within a lineage of spatial critiques against the de regulation, privatisation and marketization of cities during such sporting mega events. As such, this work highlights how artist and activist groups have utilised performative spatial sporting interventions as a form of public political protest in neo liberal city spaces.

In specific relation to the numerous protests held against the re development and social displacement which occurred in the run up to the London 2012 Olympics, Boykoff cites the 'Counter-Olympics-Network' as key actors in this cultural milieu. This network included activist members of the Space Hijackers and the AAA (who due to increasingly draconian measures by the Metropolitan Police) came up with creative and humourous solutions to express political concerns through parodic sport. These actions included 'The Austerity Games' which were held as a response to the excesses of public and private investment in the Stratford Olympic Village. Here, absurdist sporting contests were staged under titles such as 'the 100 Meter race to the bottom', the 'Deficit Discus', 'Hardship Hurdles', and 'Toss a Tory Shot Put'. Most notorious was the 'Reclaim the Streets Peloton' which resulted in a large police kettle and mass arrests on Tower Bridge.

The public, absurd and playful nature of such interventions helped, according to Boykoff, to "press forward a number of pre conditions of collective action, allowing campaigners to maintain solidarity while attracting new recruits" (2014: 128). Placing such multiform

absurdist activist tactics within a wider pattern of protest in the early 21st century (found within other spatial interventions of the Arab Spring and Occupy movement), Boykoff crucially builds upon Duncombe's concept of 'progressive spectacle politics' to explain how through subverting sport within performative public contexts, social actors have been able to "deconstruct reality through performative critique as a form of 'dissident citizenship'" (ibid: 31). Following this line of inquiry further, my research will question how 3SF offers players' the ability to deconstruct reality and build new forms of creative politics from below. Also, what tactics are employed to achieve this state.

The value of Boykoff's methodological approach is found in his decision to place the words of those involved as central to his research. He performed a number of interviews and attended organising meetings in the run up to the games (albeit as an outsider). Through attendance at these meetings he gathered a broad range of social actors within which to place his study. However, Boykoff's transience, (being an American academic on a short research trip) and his lack of local knowledge with regards to a wider samizdat history of creative activist resistance in London, means that the study fails to move beyond the micro-context of the Olympics and into a wider cultural milieu of resistance. In this regard, a strength of my research will be my 'situatedness' within both the alternative soccerscape and within various anarchist political groups in London over the last fifteen years.

3SF as Art-Sport or Artification?

As previously detailed, the SI's political program was intent on breaking down the divisions upheld between 'art' and everyday life. However, their most visible legacy has, ironically, mostly been within contemporary art contexts (see Barbrook, 2015). Testament to this legacy, 3SF is often utilised within such contexts as a form of public outreach which brings together sport, politics and art in an accessible and relatable way. In this sense, a key comparative case study for my research is the revival of Guy Debord's 'Game of War' which has recently been played for 'activist training purposes' by 'Classwargames' in a number of

contexts (Barbrook, 2015). Funded predominantly by the Arts Council since 2010 and played in a number of contemporary art galleries and anarchist cultural spaces in London, it has also been described in the spurious terms of 'art-speak' as a 'transitory cooperative artwork which embodied the teachings of Situationism'. Further to this dual framing of Game of War by the Arts Council and Classwargames, I will ask how 3SF is also perceived as a distinct form of 'cooperative artwork' by some players and curators, whilst for others it remains an autonomous anarchist training tool.

Within a wider contemporary art context, a number of artistic collectives have also been empowered to utilise football as a device to intervene in public spaces over the last decades. Here football provided a public platform to speak to issues relating to global capital and its relationship to physical culture. Examples can be found in the artistic duo's 0100101110101101.org's work in the development of a fictitious and segregated Nikeplatz in Vienna in 2003 (Gronau, 2015) and *Pied La Biche's* parodic step by step recreation of the World Cup Final of 1982 on a public park in Lyon in 2008 (Schwell, Buchowski & Kowalska, 2016).

Another key example of the use of football in contemporary art contexts is found in Maurizio Cattelan's work. His practice utilised the politics of Italian football in inventive and public contexts to comment on the increasing racism and corruption found in Italian society throughout the 1990s. Analysed by MacCauliffe within Haxall's edited volume 'Picturing the Beautiful Game' (2019), this book has been a key resource in uncovering football's enduring links to modern art and the ways in which contemporary artists use football as a form of critique and creative practice. Artistic football interventions remain understudied within the Sociology of Sport but offer key analogues as to my investigation of the purpose and response to 3SF in these curatorial contexts.

3SF's recent affiliation with contemporary art institutions and public art projects is not simply due to the repute of the Danish painter who devised the game. It is also implicated

within what Hughson has termed the recent 'artification of football' (2019). Drawing upon Shapiro and Heinich's concept - which seeks to analyse the processes by which cultural forms become or are framed within 'art' discourses – Hughson identifies the ways in which football has increasingly been utilised within such public curatorial contexts. In this sense my work further questions how these projects are conceived, perceived and experienced by stake holders and public alike.

Frogett's work on participants' 'in between' experiences of 'Art-Sport' for the University of Central Lancashire's Psychosocial Research Unit is an applicable study in this regard (2019). Here she appraises how the '2012 Cultural Olympiad' sought to bring together art and sport in participatory ways. Focussing on artist and curator led initiatives such as 'Dancing with Rhinos' (a Leeds based amalgam of rugby and dance) and the Sea Swim project, (which 'brought artists to the water' and 'swimmers to art'), she highlights the unstable position of such hybrid and participant-led forms of public engagement through sport.

Placing participant's interviews within a triolectic between sport, art, and experience Frogett argues how a liminal 'third space' of art-sport transforms each participant's relationships to each discrete cultural form. In doing so, this act gives rise to new cultural forms and meanings. Although she focusses on activities expressly created and commissioned within gallery contexts (as opposed to the informal and autonomous developmental artistic contexts of 3SF), my project will give further voice to those who combine sport and art as a creative practice and the complex meanings then associated to the game in its use as a public performance piece.

Literature Review Summary

Akin to a literary form of psychogeography, these review chapters have placed a number of juxta positional academic and theoretical maps onto 3SF. This approach sought to make sense anew of its contemporary form and has covered considerable ground in the process.

However, in order to understand the complexity and ambiguity of 3SF as a cultural practice, (and the plurality of meanings which have subsequently been associated with the game over the last quarter of a century), it was necessary to take this more circuitous path.

In many ways the game (which was borne within a cultural context of playful subversion and parody) demands a creative intervention into standard academic approaches. In this regard, 3SF (infuriatingly) refuses the conditions of its own existence as a research topic. But this refusal is also key to the game's sociological significance as a practice which can at once be placed within the 'lived spaces' of the 'alternative soccerscape', 'the anarcho-politics of leisure' and within the world of 'art-sport'.

As the game has been realised and re imagined in these contexts (and spaces), 3SF has been shaped by a myriad of social actors, each with their own complex 'doxic' understandings of the game, and each linked to particular desires, needs and visions for social, political, artistic, and sporting change. It is also a game which has had to contend with various forms of symbolic capital and structural enclosure, leading to further struggles about what constitutes legitimate forms of cultural expression in society.

Understood within this context, I hope that my study of 3SF can reveal much about the nature of autonomous agency as it contorts within and reacts to pre-existing behavioural norms, spaces and cultural practices. Through giving a voice to those who have shaped the game from 1993 through to the 2020 3SF World Cup, my research also aims to contribute to sociological understandings of the enduring political legacy of the SI in contemporary culture. Moreover, how the game offers an embodied and spatialized everyday critique of 'football in neo-liberal times'. Here, as Borden suggests, "the everyday is not the banal, trivial effect of politics, but the place where politics are ultimately created and resolved" (2019:12).

The unresolvable tensions between 3SF players who find value in the creation of spectacular 'situations' (in contrast to more quotidian forms of political resistance), and between those who find productive meaning in instrumentalised rule-bound play, (as opposed to its rebellious and expansive counterpart), are key themes which run throughout the recent history of the game. These themes also dramatically affected my research process. With these productive tensions in mind, body and method, the following two chapters outline my approaches in the field. These chapters also further consider my position as a player researcher, alongside the dual phenomenological and structural considerations which define this study.

Methodology

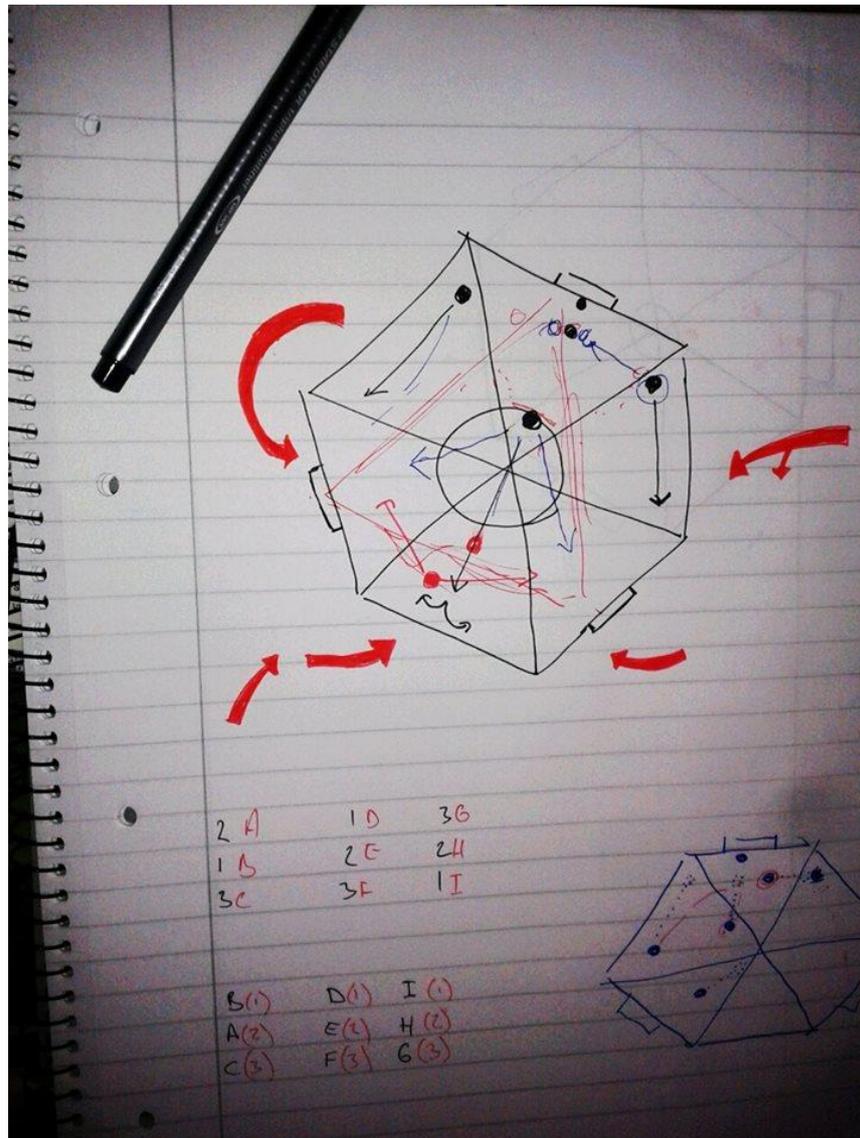


Figure 12. 3SF Tactics #1 2016. (Courtesy of E. Scorehill)

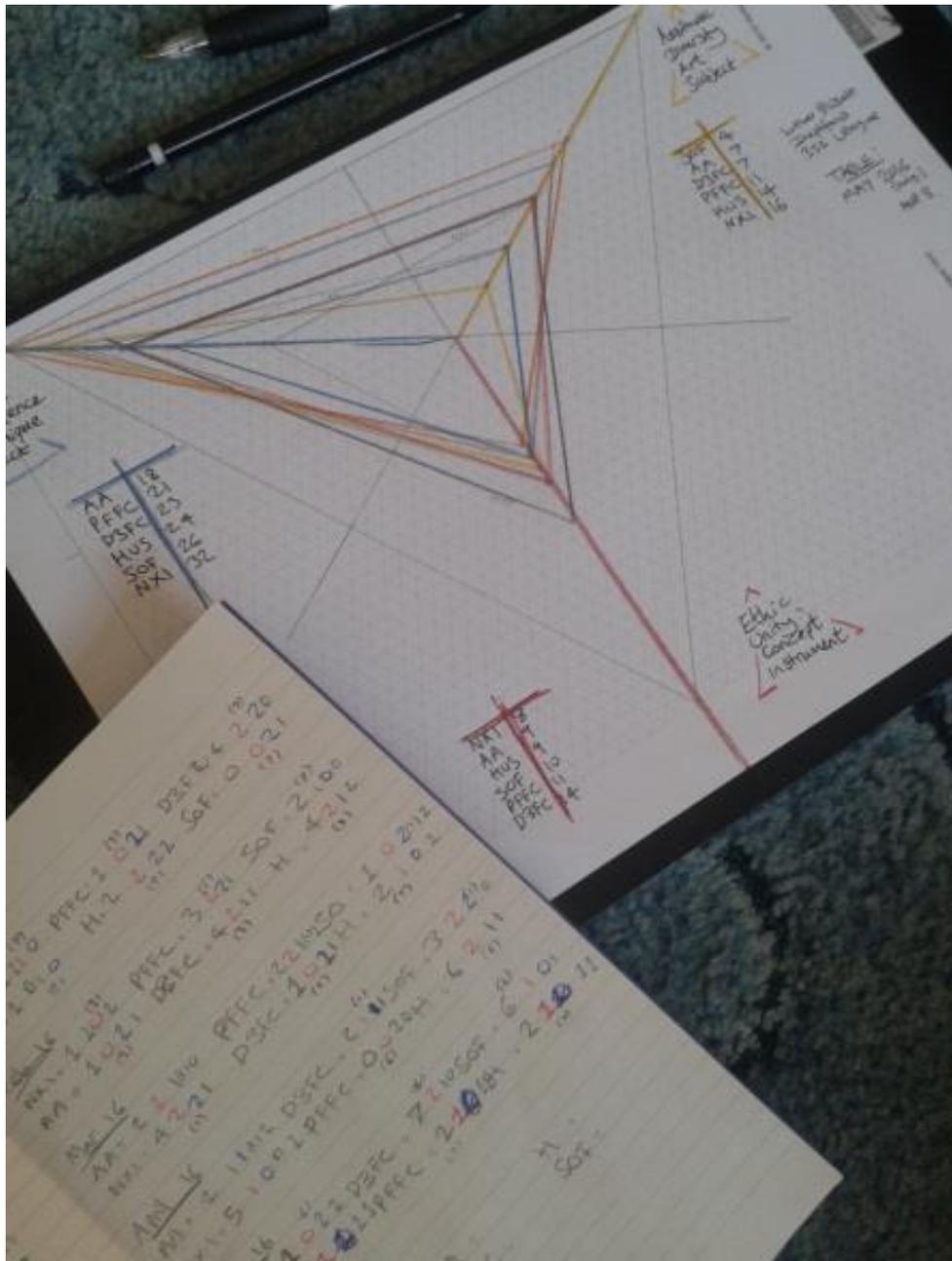


Figure 13. 3SF Tactics #2 2016 (Courtesy of E. Scorehill)

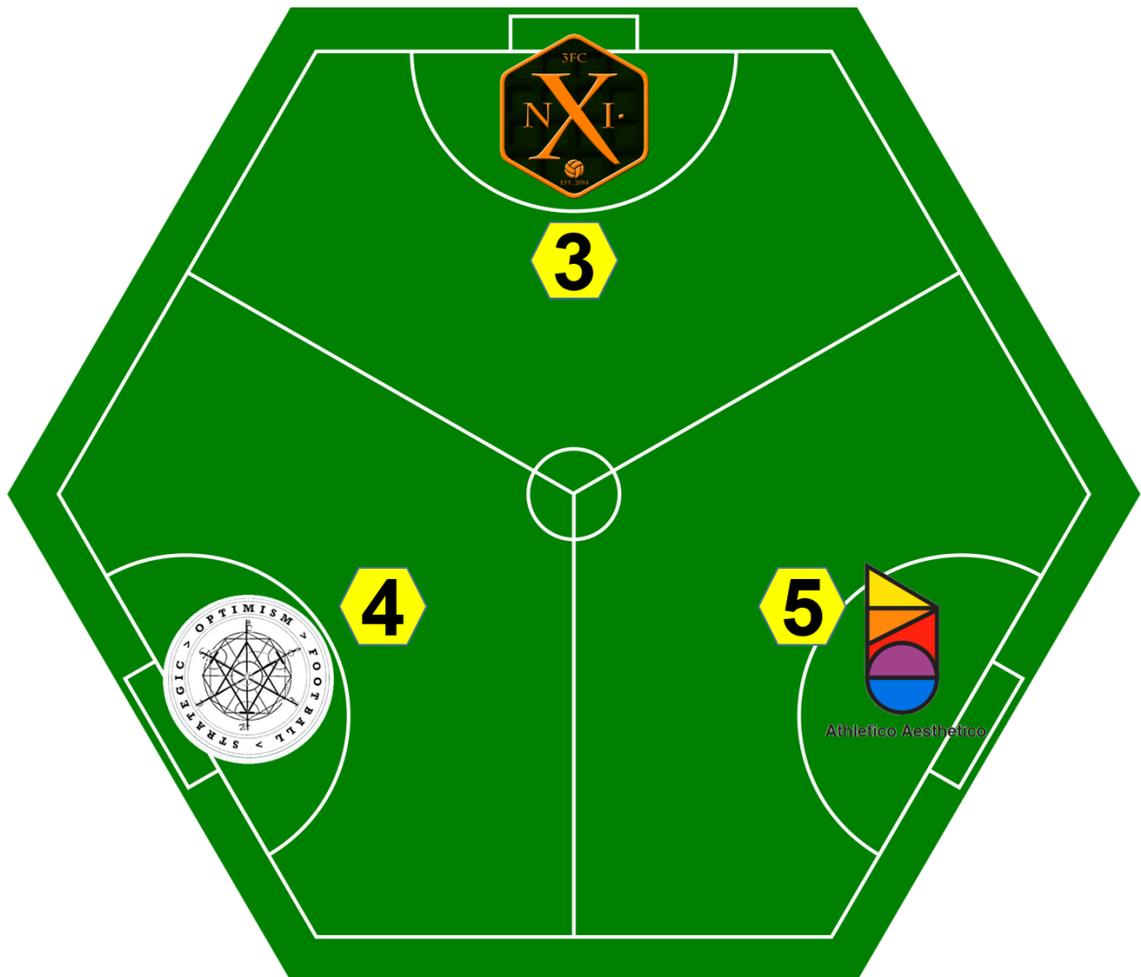


Figure 14. LBDL Score 2016- 2017 (Courtesy of LBDL)

Chapter 3. From Excessive Player to Excessive Pundit

The player-authored accounts of the alternative soccerscape make significant contributions to our understandings of ‘social transformationalism’ found within amateur football contexts. The plethora of personal reflections, biographical information, and social histories - drawn from the author’s ‘inner experiences’ and gathered during their time playing in the field - offer what Bruner has described as an ethnographic ‘vitality’ which enriches and enlivens research (1986: 9). As such, player-researcher ethnographies also demonstrate the potential to develop immersed perspectives and “an empathetic understanding of what sportspeople within the field of study are experiencing (emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually) in their sporting endeavours” (Richardson, 2000: 11). This should not be underestimated or under-valued in the production of accessible and situated knowledge about the alternative soccerscape.

There is great value in having a cultural mediator who shares the field of play with those under study. As Bourdieu and Wacquant argue, “research should take place within a field in which the researcher is truly able to feel, understand and interpret the internal logic and practical beliefs of the inhabitants” (1992: 162). In this sense, I also align with Morgan’s assertion that “sport is only truly capable of being known as it is existentially lived” (1993: 128). However, in highlighting the limitations of existing player-researcher (or participant-observer) accounts, we are also exposed to the ethical, epistemological and methodological challenges in our efforts to access and analyse embodied forms of knowledge in the soccerscape.

The dual role of athlete and researcher is a complex one (MacPhail, 2004). It enables access to a range of direct practical experiences and embodied perspectives about others, through which detailed and intricate analysis can be made. But, it is also an approach that runs the risk of an over-attachment to the research subject; towards assumptions of access to ‘authentic’ or ‘legitimate’ forms of knowledge based on immersion and personal experience.

This is a point conceded by Hughson and Inglis who contend that if we were only to look at sports as they are experienced by players ‘from the inside’, “then we would be unable to connect how sports are played and experienced with social and cultural factors beyond the immediate context of sportive practice” (2000: 130).

In order to maintain an objective analytical balance within the ‘dynamic spatiality’ of football, the authors further suggest that it is necessary to adopt methodological strategies which are “able to embrace the ‘objective’ moments of power, social relations and space beloved of sociologists, whilst retaining his (sic) focus on the roles played by experiencing human bodies in the creation and recreation of these factors” (Ibid: 128). In this regard, my research recognises that players relationships to (and within the play of) 3SF are a complex combination of what Hemphill (2005) describes as ‘inter-related social goods’: these are ‘social goods’ which are made up of both external and internal factors, individual and collective agencies and wider environmental structures. These factors have each governed the form of the game and participants understandings of it.

My methodological approach is therefore necessarily a response to Hughson and Inglis’ calls for the creative application of sociologically-informed phenomenological analyses of ‘soccer spaces’ and ‘star players’ of the game (2000, 2002). This balance between analysis of players ‘inner experience’ and an ‘external environment’, of agency and structure, remains under-utilized within the alternative soccerscape to date. As they argue, to examine the production of alternative sporting spaces from an experiential and structural perspective is “explicitly contradictory as it yokes together two different spatial imaginaries: one which stresses process and change, and one which stresses (relative) immovability and stasis” (2000: 128). However, I align with these authors in finding the ‘deliberate tension’ between these two approaches as an appropriately ‘productive’ one for 3SF.

Through this approach I hope to explicate the links between the playing-thinking-feeling bodies, moments of ‘practical consciousness’ found through the game, and also the complex

social fields which constitute the 3SF community. It also urges me to think again about how theoretical concepts, be they political philosophies or sporting practices, are realized in practice. In this regard, I hope to highlight the mutually constitutive cultural processes and bodily experiences which are involved in the enduring social life of 3SF.

My research is also a response to the above authors call for researchers to play a 'multitude of parts on the field of analysis. This means being a distanced observer and empathetic participant, both player and pundit' (Ibid: 131). Casting this multifarious methodological summons further, I contend that as an 'excessive player' I should also be an 'excessive pundit'; probing at the limits of my position within academia and the field under study. There is much need for committed cultural interpreters who can bring light to grassroots football initiatives which otherwise may remain in the cultural shadows. However, they should also be able to offer a robust critique of their own positionality, which I hope to provide subsequently.

3SF as 'Practical Consciousness'?

Eichberg (2016: 7) suggests, 'to play is to ask questions'. Therefore, my project seeks to explore what particular questions are being asked through experiences of play in 3SF. Thus far 3SF players-perspectives have not been explored in any depth. The game is cursorily mentioned within Eichberg's 'Questioning Play' (2016) in reference to the unique character of 'Danish Football'. It also appears in Kuhn's (2011) compilation through the reproduction of a text from an Association of Autonomous Astronauts parodic political pamphlet printed in the mid-1990s. A brief history of the game also lays some important contextual groundwork within Haxall's edited volume 'Picturing the Beautiful Game' (2019).

However, a key text about the game remains unpublished in the form of (fellow 3SF player) Collier's doctoral dissertation which he generously gave to me at the start of my PhD program. Utilising Scott's concept of the 'infra politics of resistance' - a neologism invented

for a genre of quixotic subaltern politics without adequate taxonomy (2005: 66) – Collier boldly states how 3SF (alongside the revival of psychogeography in left-wing activism) operates as a subversive intervention for players to awaken a ‘revolutionary consciousness’. He further explains the game of 3SF as a cultural practice malleable enough to infiltrate and influence academic scientific journals, Japanese game shows, the FIFA headquarters, and most importantly, South London ‘Chaos Magick circles’, all in the service of an ‘open’ revolutionary agenda.

For all the merits of Collier’s work, the ‘malleability’ identified within 3SF and its tangible impact in material culture is left deliberately vague. Throughout his work, an irreverent myth emerges about the game which is constructed through the words and actions of prominent voices drawn from early anarchic iterations of the game. Similar to his early work within the University of Strategic Optimism (Karlsberg, 2013), and in the spirit of his subject matter, Collier stages an absurd literary intervention which is designed to confuse as much as to enlighten. Despite the parodic tone of Collier’s trilectic treatise, my research seeks to take seriously the proposition that the act of playing 3SF can be a form of critical or practical consciousness. Also, that it is indicative of both individual expression, personal epiphany and collective collaboration. However, further questions arise as to how can we measure the meanings attached to the game adequately and who will be empowered to define them?

To answer some of the above questions I again align with the work of Hughson and Inglis and their related concept of the body-subject-player (2000). Here, they develop Husserl’s, body-subject paradigm - that all forms of consciousness are situated as ‘body subjects’ (in subjective and relativist experiences of specific historical and cultural circumstances) - into a tri-partite configuration of player-body-subject. Thus the authors contend that each ‘playing’ body is (in itself) a form of ‘practical consciousness’. In this sense, players do not move on the field of play as an act of conscious reflection per se, but as an application of ‘practical knowledge’ generated by the field and body in inter-relation. This is a key

consideration for understanding the motivations and experiences of play in 3SF during my interviews.

Both Hughson and Inglis, (and the related further work by Hemphill) draw upon Merleau-Ponty's 'Structure of behaviour' (1963) to explain footballer 'consciousness'. Within the source text Merleau-Ponty explains how forms of consciousness are complexly interwoven within the action on the field of play.

For the player in action the soccer field is not an "object", that is, the ideal term which can give rise to an indefinite multiplicity of perspectival views and remain equivalent under its apparent transformations. It is pervaded with lines of force (the "yard lines"; those which demarcate the "penalty area") and is articulated into sectors (for example, the "openings" between the adversaries) that call for a certain mode of action and which initiate and guide the action as if the player were unaware of it. The field itself is not given to him but present as the immanent term of his practical intentions; the player becomes one with it and feels the direction of the "goal" for example, just as immediately as the vertical and the horizontal planes of his own body. It would not be sufficient to say that consciousness inhabits this milieu. At this moment consciousness is nothing other than the dialectic of milieu and action...Each manoeuvre undertaken by the player modifies the character of the field and establishes new lines of force in which the action in turn unfolds and is accomplished, again altering the phenomenal field.

(cited in Hemphill 2005: 7)

As the above quotation suggests, the football pitch, be it hexagonal or rectangular, should not be understood as an 'object' for players or researchers (as body-subjects), but instead as a site of transitory practical consciousness. With every move each player, albeit unequally, mutually shapes and constitutes the contours of the field (be that a social or material one). The 3SF pitch, the players and the action occurring on it, are therefore indivisible and both

demonstrative of inherited (doxic) 'modes of action', individual intent, collective flow and 'consciousness'. Players contrasting approaches to the game also contribute to ever changing 'lines of force'. However, each player is also able to effect and alter the nature of play and the experiences of others involved. It is therefore within a Merleau-Pontian conception of footballer's consciousness, as 'the dialectic of milieu and action', between the experience of play and the wider context/environment, which is where I position my research into 3SF. Through this approach, my methodology seeks to detail the players' experiences of the 'active' dismantling of sporting norms and the uncertain prospects which result from such acts. 3SFers have at various points in time and space actively removed (or in some cases deliberately reintroduced) inherited 'lines of force' from two sided football. Therefore, in order to reassess the 'modes of action' and 'practical intentions' of the players, it is necessary for me to explore what is occurring for the players in these moments of re-definition and re-formulation in our interviews.

'Narrative Horizons' and the 'Quest for Meaning' in 3SF

As detailed above, existing studies of 3SF (and the wider alternative soccerscape) do not variegate or analyse the plurality of experiences found on the field of play. Nor do they consider the associated meanings which players take away from such collective moments into their everyday lives. By situating my research within the particular experiences of a wide sample of players we can begin to explicate further how many forms of praxis and consciousness manifest and inter-relate on the same pitches of 3SF. As Denison and Markula suggest, "sport and movement experiences can be elusive, bodily, intense, and contradictory" (2003: 9). Therefore, my approach will be to give space to players in interviews to reflect on what it feels like to play the game on their own terms (and in their own language) and to document the common (and divergent) narrative threads which emerge from such reflections. It is hoped this approach demonstrates how 3SF gives tangible meaning to player's lives in contrasting and uneven ways.

For Kretschmer, embodied forms of 'spatial literacy' - found through the real time collective experiences which occur during political protests - offer a 'complex movement vocabulary' through which social actors articulate, 'read' and actualise their concerns. The same concept is well applied to the fields of 3SF, where players also 'read', move, and express space in specific ways. Through this common sporting language, playing bodies adapt to novel conditions and corporally and cognitively collaborate. In the development of a shared understanding of these creative vernacular movements, football players are then able to derive meanings which 'flow' through the game in order to 'find collectivity' (Kretschmer, 2018: 74-76). Further to this, I hope to document how players find such flow and collectivity in 3SF.

MacIntyre usefully terms the reflective understandings of 'flowing intelligibility' which can be engendered in sport (between players' intentions, motives, passions and purposes) as a 'quest for narrativity'. This 'quest' characterises the ways in which social actors, as a necessary collective social process, seek to rationalise their experiences and comprehend, order, survive and relate to the world around them (1981: 195, 209). The task within my interviews will therefore be to uncover how 3SF is 'narrativised' and comprehended by the players. I seek to ask what constitutes their 'movement vocabularies' or 'flows' and what these speak to? In pursuit of what goal?

The Body as Narrative

For Weiss, the body offers a 'narrative horizon', through which individuals experience, derive meaning, and make sense of the world (2012: 33-35). These are constitutive of a number of limited horizons through which social actors are able to articulate their experiences and co-author the game of 3SF. This is a crucial consideration for my analysis of interviews. As she explains further,

There is no such thing as a simple act of perception since anything we are perceiving appears against a dense backdrop of past, present, and future experiences...these include temporal horizons, spatial horizons, intersubjective and imaginary horizons...

When playing 3SF, the configuration of the game, the style and spirit of the play, and the playing body itself, are informed and inflected with a 'dense backdrop' of multiple pasts, presents and futures. Each narrative horizon is thus linked to individual and collective understandings of sport, politics and art. This complex of overlapping and interrelated 'narrative horizons' found on the fields of 3SF play, render the engaged human playing body, the experiences of playing, and the practice itself, as 'semantic fields' to be understood and critically analysed as such. My approach will therefore be to identify common narrative horizons and form my analysis chapters around such 'emergent themes' in 3SF (see Chapter 4).

Weiss, also describes the potential disjunct which is felt by social actors, between overlapping and bound narrative horizons, as 'semantic impertinences'. Similarly to Bourdieu's concept of 'crisis' these can be rebellious, elusive, irrational, and are rooted in the body (Shilling, 2004). Despite their ineffability, I see these as productive sites of inquiry, not to 'solve' the problems raised in such moments but to understand them as indicative of the various intersubjective social meanings which can be drawn from the act of play within 3SF. Therefore, the tensions and contradictions found within such semantic impertinences will form another key avenue of inquiry (especially in Chapter 5 as to the dynamic nature of sport which will be examined using Eichberg's 'trialectic of sports' model).

Enactive Approaches to 3SF

How player experiences of 3SF are best elicited, analysed and understood from a sports-psychology perspective remain beyond the scope of my study. However, an 'enactive phenomenological' approach, (as applied within a recent study on Stade Rennais FC), offers

profitable avenues of inquiry for my approach (Gesbert, Durny and Hauw, 2017). Here, 'enactive phenomenology' is understood as an 'action-oriented' analytical framework which gives primacy within player-interviews to the adjustive processes of participatory 'sense making' in sport (i.e., the dynamic meanings made between players both during and after games and training sessions). This provides a further driver for the efficacy of interviews within my own approach to 3SF.

This enactive approach employed in the above study considers how players' lived experiences are arranged, comprehended and adjusted over time in forms of 'collective coordination' (Salas 1992, De Paolo 2010). In an effort to give a wider context to overall team relationships and to 'synchronize' footballers experiences' of play, individual reflections are then analysed together in order to draw out common themes and experiences (see also, Bourbousson et al. 2012; Gesbert and Durny, 2017; Poizat et al., 2009; Verala, 1999).

Developed with the express purpose of capturing the 'situated experiences' of the play through social actors own words and reflections, this methodological approach privileges the complex relationships made between football players as 'autonomous agents' within a wider sporting 'environment' (see Araújo and Davids, 2016; Blickensderfer et al., 2010; Legrand, 2007). Although predominantly applied to elite athlete's perspectives, I bring this reflective balanced approach between 'autonomy and environment' to the amateur contexts of 3SF. Within my analysis I will therefore group together and analyse the mix of individual and shared collective meanings given to 3SF in my interviews. In doing so, I will also provide a space rarely afforded to amateur athletes to reflect upon their actions and 'situate' themselves and others within a wider cultural and playing context.

Summary

In order to enrich our understandings of the competing discourses of those who share the same fields of play, my research will employ a 'phenomenologically informed' sociology of 3SF. It will consider how experiences of play are 'narrativised' by individuals and guided by collective flows, vocabularies, horizons, and external structural factors. It will also identify common narrative themes and outstanding divergent cases in order to group and analyse these appropriately. This 'enactive' analysis of the 'lifeworld' of 3SF will be balanced with my own reflections on the game as a 'player-body-subject-researcher'.¹⁴ These reflections will be presented through personal narrative snapshots and field note extracts which will begin each analysis chapter. It is hoped these more creative personalised passages will augment and enliven the reflections and responses of the social field, to give an ethnographic 'vitality' to my research.

Having foregrounded my fieldwork within the existing literature and a methodological rationale, the following methods chapter will offer a more descriptive review of my fieldwork. This includes the practical and ethical considerations that I brought into the field as a PhD researcher and how my data was gathered and analysed (including the sample size and demographics). It also further details my attempts to mitigate issues of power, androcentrism and unconscious bias found in this research.

¹⁴ In Schutz's 1972 'Phenomenology of the Social World', he uses the term 'lifeworld' within a wider intellectual project of detailing the minutiae and mundanity of peoples everyday lives. The concept of 'lifeworld' is also employed to explain how society/culture is experienced not solely as a product of external forces or structures, demarcated by a Cartesian dualism but instead equally felt and experienced internally in thought, emotion and also in bodily action.



Figure 15. The researcher being interviewed about 3SF by RTE National Television in Germany 2017. (Courtesy of RTE)

Chapter 4. Approaches and Reflections

The following chapter is based on the ethnographic research I conducted from August 2017 through to August 2020. This research received approval from the SSPSSR Ethics Committee at the University of Kent and was developed using guidelines from the British Sociology Association.¹⁵ It is important to disclose at this point that previous to my PhD I was already an active member of the 3SF community. I joined the London game at the launch of the Triball league in December 2016 and also competed in the 2017 World Cup with New Cross Internationals. Following this tournament, I was appointed to the organising committee as team liaison for the 2020 World Cup: an event which sadly was postponed until at least 2021 due to Covid-19.

During my time in the field I played 3SF in the confluence of two rivers, an anarchist festival, an abandoned sugar factory, a bullring in Madrid, a former Olympic athletics stadium, municipal parks in Edinburgh, Bologna, Prato, and London, an art school in Lithuania, and as part of contemporary art exhibitions in Germany and the TATE Modern. I was also actively involved in the day-to-day life of the 3SF community. This involved tasks such as helping set up the hexagonal pitches of play, moving equipment to and from storage, and socialising with other players. As a member of a 'successful' 3SF team, I was also interviewed for German national television and pictures of me playing appeared in a number of European press articles about the game at the time (see fig. 15).

As a player-researcher (from August 2017 onwards), I played predominantly for New Cross Irregulars and New Cross Internationals (and also temporarily with other teams) in the Triball and Fordham Park Leagues. However, I also played in the first 'Invisible League' experimental 3SF games in November 2018. These matches used giant inflatable balls, acrylic paint and assorted sizes of wellington boots. Attendance at these games was followed by a 3SF game on the 333th day of the year at the Psychogeographic Poker and

¹⁵ See, https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf

Quantum Chromo Dynamic Poster Making workshop which marked the 'Unionising of Dead Workers' at the 'Craftory' anarchist space in Silvertown. It is safe to say that if I entered the social field as an athlete, I have left it an aesthete. The final formal interviews were undertaken for the project after playing in the Edinburgh Situationist Disunited Football League at Pilrig Park, Leith, in May 2019. Unfortunately I had missed the opportunity to play in the Situationist table tennis tournament held there a month earlier.

The ethnographic observations, notes and fieldwork diaries I gathered over the course of these three and a half years in the field were complimented by 44 semi-structured interviews with players, organisers, curators and activists from across the globe. These interviews were conducted with participants who had been involved across the games development since the first known match at the 1993 'Anarchist Summer School' in Glasgow through to its recent contemporary sporting iterations. Throughout these research experiences I encountered many of the ethical and epistemological dilemmas of a relatively inexperienced researcher who was already involved in the subcultural practice under ethnographic study. This chapter will therefore give reflections on some of these issues alongside my attempts to overcome questions of distance and objectivity. It also includes a comprehensive overview of the task of data collection, including participant sample size and a rationale for their inclusion in the project.

Early Days and Experimental Games

In order to gain a sense of the contested and diverse terrains in which the game has been developed and subsequently resisted against, it was important for my research to gather data from people who have been involved in 3SF in a number of different cultural contexts and capacities. Therefore, included in this research sample are football players, coaches, artists and activists who were involved in early experimental games. This sample group was comprised of members of the London Psychogeographic Association, The Workshop for Non Linear Architecture and The Association for Autonomous Astronauts. These small

autonomous groups and activist anarchist networks all used the game as an experimental political critique throughout the 1990s and continued to be active in the community in keeping the anarchic spirit of the game alive. This included the devising of the 2016 Quantum Equinox Fluxus Football Festivals and other outlier events which enabled players to explore the relationship between play and politics through the game.

Due to 3SF's mythopoetic role within a concurrent samizdat fanzine and activist DIY self-publishing network, I also interviewed those who wrote about the game under various pseudonyms for Smile and Unpopular Press. This was a key factor in my attempts to relate the breadth and diversity of the social field of 3SF. Also in order for me to understand how influential these early cultural contexts have been in the recent developments of alternative spaces for 3SF found in the Invisible League in London, Cambridge and Alytus in Lithuania.

Drawn from this sample were those who first devised the game, writers who helped spread the game across Europe, and also those player-activists who more recently had resisted 'sportised' codifications and hierarchies. This sample provides the basis for my second analysis chapter, which details the complex meanings and motivations which accompany 3SF interventions and absurd political protest matches which continue to be held in parallel to more normative sporting iterations of the game.

Art Context

3SF has been utilised in a variety of arts and cultural contexts as it provides an alluring and at times 'spectacular' device to highlight and comment on social and political issues. In this regard, I was able to gain valuable perspectives on how 3SF has been used in contemporary art contexts through various interviews with curators. These included with a leading member of the French arts collective 'Pied La Biche', who put on a number of games during the Lyon Biennale of contemporary art in 2009; the organiser of the Whitechapel Gallery UK general election game in 2010; and the founder of Philosophy Football FC, (who helped

organise the INENART and the Taksim square 3SF games held as part of the 13th Istanbul Biennale in 2013).¹⁶ Also the curator of the Tate Modern 3SF showcase in August 2019 (see Chapter 7).

This select research sample helped me gain valuable perspectives as to a distinct ‘afterlife’ of 3SF within institutional art settings. They also helped me to understand the different issues which are raised when activities such as 3SF are placed within such outreach contexts as the game is used as a tool for public engagement. This pertained specifically to how the game was framed by those seeking to instrumentalise it in order to make it intelligible for a wider audience. Also how that framing was perceived of in the wider playing community.

Internationalism

In a wider international context, 3SF has also been taken on and developed in various sporting formats. In Belarus, a nationwide ‘Velcom 3G’ league involving over four-hundred amateur teams was set up in 2011. However, information on why it only lasted for one season is scant. The game has also been utilised in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia as part of a Milo Cans Next Games Tournament. Although I contacted both organisations to find out more about the games reception, I received no response.

However, I was able to interview various people within the international game who have set up their own versions of 3SF in pedagogical sporting contexts. This included the founders of Futbol3Colombia since 2012 and Tritball in Alabama since 2016. Also, various members of Dynamo Windrad FC who hosted the 2nd 3SF World Cup in 2017 and also integrated 3SF in to the clubs ‘Alternative’ Football Cup in 2015.

¹⁶ This was a match which brought international 3SF teams together for the first time and was pointedly refereed by Halil İbrahim Dinçdağ, a former first division referee and radio broadcaster banned from the field and the airwaves in Turkey for being an openly gay athlete.

This research sample was key for building a wider understanding of the further 'afterlife' of the game. It enabled me to consider how the game has been narrativised as an alternative form of football, what nascent 3SF clubs perceived the game to be achieving on a wider scale. Also, what participants invested into the game about its ability to engender long term and sustainable change in society? Moreover, it gave me a number of perspectives as to its pedagogical potential and implementation in educational settings.

Divergence

Over the last decade 3SF has been defined by competing visions for the future of the game. Therefore, in order to better understand how these divergent visions have intersected (and interacted) at tournaments, I also interviewed players and organisers involved in the Deptford X games (2012), the nth World Cup in Silkeborg (2014), the 2nd World Cup in Kassel (2017), and most recently, the controversial 'unofficial World Cup' held in Madrid (2018). This latest 3SF tournament featured a currently active professional footballer (Chievo Verona goalkeeper Stefano Sorrentino) for the first time in 3SF's history. This tournament also caused a schism in the game between a 'Stalinist' sports faction who denied any 'non-sporting 3SFers' access to the tournament despite those players having already travelled to Spain to play.

Further to this sporting schism, included in the research sample are also several founding members of the recently formed 'Invisible League'. This version of 3SF was set up in response to the increasing 'sportification' of 3SF in the autumn of 2018. Primarily based in the UK and Lithuania, players of 'Invisible football' have the express purpose of keeping alive the spirit of the more anarchic, Dadaist and experimental forms of 3SF previously developed at the Divus Gallery events of 2016, the Anti-University 'Trocchi and Triolectics' workshops, and the Alytus Art Strike Biennale's 'monstrations' held in Lithuania in both 2015 and 2017. Placing participant's divergent perspectives about these game together was

very useful for me in further enriching my understandings of the competing visions of the game and as detailed in Chapter 5, was the main driver behind my adoption of Eichberg's triolectic of sports model to understand the dynamism and instability of emergent sporting practices.

Sample Group

The largest sample group for my interviews was comprised of 3SF players who were based in the UK and who had attended or participated in The Luther Blissett 3SF Deptford League since its inception in 2012, the Triball League since 2016, and the Edinburgh Situationist Disunited Football League since 2016. This also included long serving members of founding clubs, Philosophy Football FC, Aesthetico Athletico 3SFC, Polish Husaria, Strategic Optimism FC, Deptford 3SFC and New Cross Irregulars. Also, members of fledgling 3SF teams such as Inter Melon, Partizan 3SFC, Oval 3SFC and Streatham Rovers 3SFC. The mix of older more established teams and emergent 3SF clubs within my sample greatly enhanced my understanding about the diversity of interpretations for the game, and the ways in which the formation of clubs engendered a sense of community within London.

A number of interviews were also undertaken with casual, less-regular players of the game, and non-playing members of the community. Having a range of new comers to the game (alongside veteran players and spectators) included in my sample was an important factor in obtaining a more nuanced understanding of how perceptions of 3SF have changed over time. Also how initial responses to the game by players were related to both Jorn and the decentred competition at Fordham Park in my interviews.

3SF has been played by relatively few people over the course of its existence. However, it would be unreasonable to expect them all to be represented in this ethnographic project. Instead, I rely on a select sample size which includes many of the key figures who have developed and played the game over the last 25 years to draw my conclusions. There is no

guarantee that they give a typical experience of the game, although there were many thematic commonalities which suggest validity in my conclusions (Maxwell, 1996).

33 of the 44 interviewees in my sample identified as men, 8 as women, 1 as non-binary and 1 as a trans-woman. 5 of the sample identified as BAME or as a Person of Colour with the rest identifying as White or White Other. The nationalities of interviewees were majority (27 of 44) British. However, they also consisted of participants from Poland, Turkey, France, Portugal, Germany, the United States of America, Colombia, Lithuania, Romania, Australia and Ireland. The age of interviewees ranged from age 18 to 64. Having a range of nationalities and demographics within my research sample I thought was a vital task as only then would I be able to consider the myriad of perspectives about the game and its global reach. This was vital in testing whether experiences of the game were common across the playing community. Also, what differed depending on these various contexts and interpretations.

Having read a pre prepared participant information sheet and had the opportunity to ask any further questions about the project, each participant gave their unreserved permission to use their interview transcripts for my research. Most participants wanted their real names to be used, and 5 opted for a pseudonym of their own choosing. An appendix at the back of this document provides a table which includes the location of each interview, the date of the interview and further contextual information of participants (such as club played for) for ease of reference.

Active Approaches

Due to the substantial networks and contextual knowledge that I had built up prior to undertaking my fieldwork interviews, I was able to draw upon a wide number of participants to inform my analysis of 3SF. I had access to a number of mailing lists (including that of both London Leagues and World Cups) to gather further contact information. I also made sure to

supplement these lists with my own contacts made whilst playing the game across Europe. Rather than relying on standardised outreach emails and formal requests for interviews, (common in the data collection process), I used the 3SF 'football capital' I had accrued within the game to help persuade specific social actors in the field to be a part of the project (see Tucker, 2020). This was a vital task for my research as it ensured a plurality of perspectives by current and former members of the community. This would not have been possible if relying on responses to generic calls for interviewees.

As Stoll (2013) suggests, due to the immersed nature of ethnographic research, academics have the opportunity in these contexts to reach out to marginalised members of the social field. For me this meant involving members of the community (specifically some of the women) who had stopped playing the game over recent years due to the changing competitive environment of the leagues in London. I had heard anecdotal stories as to why certain players had stopped playing in recent years. However, I wanted to find out players perspectives from those directly involved. In providing the opportunity for these perspectives to be heard I hoped to mitigate some of the inherent bias in my findings which had the potential to relate an androcentric, hagiographical narrative about 3SF. Any distortions of the data collected through these specific approaches for interview participants are entirely mine and I accept the risk that entailed.

When?

The majority of the interviews were conducted during the months of November and December 2018. At this point I had participated in the breadth of activities in the field and I was also known to other participants beyond my association with New Cross Irregulars. Carrying the interviews out in such short proximity to one another was conducive to maintaining momentum and 'flow' in the research process. It also enabled me to adapt and change aspects of the interview whilst my reflections on their efficacy were still fresh in my mind. These dynamic considerations included how much to stick to the broad narrative

themes which I had pre-prepared to guide the participants through the interview, or whether to remain open to productive diversions led by the interviewees. Whilst this malleability had varying degrees of success in practice, (at times leading me towards long digressions and diversions), I stand by the decision to be flexible and open when carrying out this research (Holloway & Todres, 2003).

In my interviews many of the participants were excited to know more about the project and my experiences of the game. Therefore, opportunities were given during these conversations to ask questions or for the interviewee to lead discussion. This flexibility was a key aspect of this research as “with issues surrounding community and identity it is important to adapt, reframe, and listen to respondents in order to gain some insight into their emotions and feelings” (Clarke & Garner, 2010: 180).

How Long? Who Decided?

An activity as quixotic as 3SF required a suitably elastic and eclectic approach to data collection. In this regard, the interviews were conducted in locations of the interviewee’s choice. This was for their own comfort and convenience. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to 5 hours depending on location and activity. In keeping with the spirit of the game, some participants had creative suggestions for how and where the interviews should take place. As Cain has argued “a research subject has the power to participate in the formulation of the problem, in the choice of techniques, and in the construction of explanations” (1986: 262-63). As such, in allowing for a more participatory approach to the research process, I also took my cues from Lincoln and Denzin’s strident rejection of the unnecessarily hierarchical and at times exploitative relationship between researcher and the researched (1994). I aimed to give power to interviewees in this regard.

Richardson uses the metaphor of ‘crystallization’ to demonstrate how the study of social worlds although always partial, is multifaceted and requires multiple strategies to approach

the subject (2000, 2003). As a consequence of this multiplicitous approach, my interviews were held in a variety of unorthodox contexts and locations. These included interviews at the monument to the 1848 codification of 'Cambridge Rules' Football; at a political protest march demanding the repatriation of Stolen Indigenous Australian artefacts at the British Museum; extended psychogeographic drifts along the ley-lines of London Docklands and Greenwich; also at the 'omphalos' of the British Empire at Mudchute Gardens; near a waterfall in Puglia; and during a tour of the significant sites of chaos magic in the 'New Cross Triangle' of South London.

Thankfully for the health of my field recorder and the laborious task of transcription, interviews also took place in more stable audio environments such as in people's homes, public houses, libraries, cafes and art galleries. In addition to this record keeping, I also kept a research diary which reflected upon each interview in the hours after completion, and wrote cursory notes about my experiences and appraisals of each meeting during these interviews. One exception to my approach in this regard was with the founder of F3C in Colombia, whom I had a number of Spanish language email exchanges using Google translate. This obviously affected communication.

Every effort was made to conduct interviews face to face. However, due to logistical and financial practicalities the majority of international interviews were conducted using Skype or by telephone. Upon completion, each interview was then partially transcribed and placed into broad subject groups through a systematic thematic approach. This drew out the narrative commonalities as well as the contrasting 'narrative' perspectives on the game. Such common themes and divergences form the basis of my three analysis chapters, which broadly are focussed on 'Definitive Tensions' - the ontological uncertainty of the game and the symbolic violence of its recent codification in Chapter 5; 'Political Play' - 3SF as politicised experiential play and urban intervention in Chapter 6; and 'Afterlife' - the tangible longer term praxis of 3SF in codified pedagogical and community contexts in Chapter 7.

Why Interviews?

This research project was led by the results and experiences of fieldwork rather than driven by a teleological hypothesis supplanted onto the subject. This was an important factor as it allowed me to be guided by the experiences and interactions in the field (and related contexts) and not to foreclose avenues of enquiry in order to instrumentalise a previously held research position. In other words, theory followed the feet and the feet followed the ball (Eichberg, 2016: 406). In this sense, I gathered much of my data through informal conversations and observations during my time playing in the field. However, the semi-structured interviews gave me and other players a further chance to reflect and consider our own positions within 3SF. Also, how we perceived our role in the games past, present and future.

Extolling the virtues of interviews in research, Brinkman and Kvale argue that this methodological approach gives the opportunity to “make sense of life in the public construction of the self and offer an in depth opportunity to explore feelings and ideas” (2015: 150). These moments of reflection and exploration were extremely valuable in drawing out the narrative framework for the project and in my further understanding of the fragmented social field of 3SF.

The central aims of my project were to democratise the narratives which have been produced about 3SF. Also, to enrich our understandings of the social field and identify the forms of practical consciousness found therein. Whilst my own immersed playing experiences and perspectives (which form the narrative introduction to each analysis chapter) provided the structural basis for this thesis, the use of interviews were a vital complimentary and reflective methodological tool in helping to understand how 3SF is collectively narrativised and consequently produced in space. They also held a vital position within my methodological approach in understanding what shared meanings held the 3SF

community together and also what divergent interpretations were causing tensions within the game.

In what Polkinghorne (1995: 11) describes as the 'emplotted stories' which can be found through interviews, "story memories retain the complexity of the situation in which an action was undertaken and the emotional and motivational meaning connected with it". As such, the use of semi-structured interviews through which to explore how participants narrativised their experiences of 3SF enabled me to delve deeper into the complexity of the game as a lived practice. These 'emplotted stories' also enabled me to question further the meanings and forms of consciousness which are associated with the game that more structured and instrumentalised questionnaire style interviews may not have achieved. Moreover, these loosely structured interviews provided a more intuitive, collaborative and responsive way to supplement my personal ethnographic experiences in the field.

Interview Aftercare

As a player researcher I had a responsibility of care to fellow 3SFers who agreed to be interviewed. Despite the semi-structured and informal nature of the interviews undertaken, the reflective conversations we undertook often involved many forms of disclosure about personal histories and events relating to potential trauma in participants lives. This (at times) meant players were relating information which was of a delicate and intimate nature. However, participants may have not foreseen this disclosure prior to our interview. Therefore to ensure that there was adequate contingency for this outcome, I included the contact information for a number of free counselling services on my information sheet. This may have been useful to participants in dealing with anything raised during the interview process. I also instigated email exchanges with each interviewee in the weeks following our meetings. This enabled me to informally check in and obtain any feedback from them relevant to any potential safeguarding concerns. This also offered the opportunity for

interviewees to redact information they felt might be too compromising or personal or to anonymise their responses. This was not something which any participant requested.

A Note on Analysis

As stated above my analysis is divided into three discrete chapters. This division and presentation was developed over a number of stages of analysis after I had completed the majority of my interviews. Although there are multiple forms of analysis software through which to systematise and order data gathered whilst in the field, due to my experiences playing the game over the last four years (and the contextual knowledge that allowed), I began with more personal and intuitive analytical groupings of the common themes which emerged from my interviews. This approach showed me how the various participants positioned and situated their 'narrative horizons' about the game in to two broad groups. These were those who were opposed to the current trajectory of the game and those who saw this formalisation and codification as key to 3SF's long term future.

Within these two broad groupings (of pro and anti 3SF as a nascent formalised sport) I then noted whether participants within specific teams or 3SF iterations articulated common concerns or perceptions about the game in order to test whether these could form the basis of my analysis. This prompted a second stage of ordering which further variegated the intersecting narratives which constituted these broad groups. At this point it became clear that one analysis chapter would focus on the popular 'afterlife' of 3SF and its myriad of forms, and another, on the ways in which a smaller cohort (10 of 44) of participant's still related the game to its political origins and the Situationists. As such, Chapter 6 is based on the responses of a vocal and influential minority who most visibly and demonstrably resisted 3SF's recent 'sportization' and found meaning in 3SF as a form of political play and spatial intervention. In contrast, Chapter 7 focusses on how 3SF fits within the social transformationalism of the alternative soccerscape and the games wider use as a pedagogical tool in a global context.

Given the diversity and divergence of responses within the 3SF community, after identifying and grouping together participant responses for these two analysis chapters, I decided that my first analysis chapter (Chapter 5) needed to primarily set the fragmented social scene for the reader and to provide important contextual information about the competing agencies within the game. As such, I utilised voices from across the social field to show the contradictory intersubjective and semantic impertinences which abound in the game often within the same teams. This analysis chapter also further served to demonstrate the fragile coalitions within the game and lay the foundations for the subsequent discrete analysis of 3SF.

The majority of my interviews were undertaken immediately after the 2018 schism within the game. Therefore this topic runs as a narrative thread which loosely links each analysis chapter together. However, in order to fully relate to the reader how the game has developed and changed during my time in the field, I begin each analysis chapter with field notes which contain my own narrative reflections on the game, my interview experiences and how I was implicated in recent 3SF developments. These narrative introductions set up the key themes of the chapter in an accessible way and aimed to enrich and augment the words of fellow players and 3SF organisers. The words of the interviews then act as a springboard for me to discuss these emergent themes with more depth and rigour.

Looking for Luther. Archival Visits and the 'Dietrologia' of 3SF

Perhaps the most important figure in the early development of 3SF was the former Watford, England and AC Milan Striker, Luther Blissett. However, despite repeated calls to the player's agent, and multiple invitations for him to attend games at Fordham Park - site of the LBDL - responses were unforthcoming from his representatives about my requests for an interview about 3SF. My project remains limited by this omission.

How Luther Blissett is implicated within the game of 3SF is a more complex question than it first appears however. The former professional footballer has been credited with setting up 3SF training camps for young people during his playing days at Vicarage Road. He also (apparently) formed regular autonomous protests against productive society in the early 1980s as an 'anti-footballer of the people' (much to the delight of 80,000 'working class heroes' at the San Siro in Milan) (see Home, 1997).

To the befuddlement of Luther 'the player', Luther Blissett is also a multi-use name attributed to a predominantly Italian, artistic, literary, and political movement with its origins in the early to mid-1990s. Luther Blissett was a *nom de plume* and mythic activist character appropriated by various autonomous activist groups across Europe aiming to re-engage with left-wing politics through site specific urban interventions, psycho geographic radio broadcasts, media pranks and burgeoning Internet activism. The Luther Blissett Group also authored many early texts about 3SF. Blissett's prominent unlikely position in narratives of class war and political resistance was therefore a mischievous way to play with new forms of politics, football and art and to secure collective anonymity for the real and imagined activities. It was also part of, *Il gioco dietro una partita: the game behind the game* (see Dery, 2017; Deseriis, 2011).

In order to understand more about 'the game behind' 3SF, I needed to gain a solid grounding in the related literature produced about the game and the Blissett group. I was therefore duty bound to utilise the wealth of 3SF archive material available online. This included videos, photographs, newspaper articles, blogs, 3SF team websites and social media accounts which referenced Blissett. I also used the extensive physical print collections and interview transcripts of the Fatuous Times, London Psycho Geographical Association, Manchester Association of Psychogeography and Nottingham Psychogeography Association Newsletters, AAA Conference reports and DađA Miners and *Travailleuse Psychique* publications held at the May Day Rooms; a community hub committed to archiving anarchist activist culture and radical politics in London.

Clapton CFC to CONIFA. The Importance of 'Contextual Fieldwork'

Ethnographies are 'microscopic' in detail. As such researchers should be wary of extrapolating broader conclusions from their studies (Geertz, 1973). In this regard, my study is situated within extensive academic literature in order to better understand 3SF's cultural context and its potential sociological significance. However, I also felt that spending time in the wider cultural milieu could bolster any purely literary academic survey of these related fields. In order to obtain first-hand experience and contextual knowledge of the alternative soccerscape, I therefore attended several matches of the two major alternative football clubs in the London area. These were at matches of the explicitly left wing and anti-fascist, Clapton Community Football Club, and at the 'football hipster' favourites *par excellence*, Dulwich Hamlets FC. At these games, I spoke to fans in an informal context about their relationship to the club and football in general whilst observing the defiant and thriving fan cultures.

In order to get a sense of the wider player initiatives taking place in the alternative soccerscape of London, I also played in the Play 2 Remember Football Survivors Tournament, a joint initiative run by 'Waging Peace' and 'Football for Hope, Peace and Unity'.¹⁷ This was held at 'White City' in Hammersmith during May 2018. Here, I also had the opportunity to informally interview student coaches from Brighton based NGO Football4Peace, who were running team bonding training routines, and players for Justice for Grenfell FC. Alongside these interactions, I instigated a further email exchange with the co-founder and head coach of the London based Hornstars FC, and a former Rwanda national team player about the tournament.

In a separate field trip to Brixton Sevens, a charity fundraiser for Angel Town Estate, I also assisted in voluntary training sessions and interviewed a number of staff from Football

¹⁷ This DIY organisation uses football to raise awareness of the Rwandan genocide and forms African diaspora teams in the UK.

Beyond Borders, an educational football charity based in South London. In this context, we discussed the potential of 3SF and its similarities to other constraint-led games that were employed by the organisation which aimed to improve the communication skills of their students.

In June 2018, I attended the Confederation of Independent Football Associations World Football Tournament which was held across a number of non-league venues in Greater London. Alongside general observations about the nature of the tournament, its fan culture and the contested displays of marginalised identities, I also had the opportunity in my capacity as a freelance journalist to meet and interview players from the London-based Barawa and Somaliland national teams. This was alongside interviews of representatives from Tibet, Abkhazia, Padania, Panjaab and Western Sahrawi football confederations. At this tournament I obtained a good sense of what alternative tournament contexts meant for players, diaspora fans and clubs denied official recognition within mainstream football (and wider society) to challenge the hierarchies established within mainstream football.

Indicative of my further 'situatedness' in the alternative soccerscape (and following interviews with affiliated 3SFers), I was invited to play at a training session for London Falcons, who play in the London Unity League, (an amateur football league "designed to unite LGBT+ footballers and others in a competitive but friendly sporting environment" (London Unity League, 2018). I also participated in the Football Union at Blackheath, a friendly football collective who operate under the credos that 'Football means Freedom'.

Alternative Sports and 'ClassWar Games'

Due to the relatively recent emergence of 3SF, I initiated email exchanges with the UK associations of other emerging sports Tchoukball, Sepak Teraw and Korfball. This was to gain a comparative perspective on what challenges and obstacles were found within a wider emerging sporting field when faced with increasing (or even decreasing) levels of

participation and codification. This also led to my participation in a Sepak Tekraw Tournament held in November 2019 in Marble Arch.

Away from 'sporting' contexts, I also attended a number of 'Class War Game' events held at the London Action Resource Centre in Whitechapel and the Bread and Roses Pub in Kings Cross. This included participation in games of Guy Debord's Game of War, and a Haymarket Press affiliated 'Game Jam'. Here attendees were invited to conceptualise and develop anti-capitalist computer games which would highlight inequality and engender class-consciousness. The experiences and contextual knowledge gained throughout these activities described above have given me what I consider a fundamental grounding within both the alternative soccerscape and 3SF related activist activities. It is also a practical set of experiences which augments the small amount of existing literature which spans similar disciplines to 3SF.

Clean Research? Distance and Objectivity

Sugden cogently asks in reference to the immersive nature of investigative sociological research, how can we 'dig in the dirt and keep our hands clean?' (1999: 163). However, given the muddy terrain that much of my research was carried out in, I found keeping my hands clean (or anything else for that matter) an almost impossible task. If I extend the metaphor further, at the end of the research period I may have washed my full kit, boots, and shin pads at 60°, but the mud stains inevitably remained. In this regard, I align with feminist scholar, Oakley (1981), who suggests that so called 'hygienic' methods of data collection mystify the idea of an objective researcher and alienate many participants and researchers from the research process itself.

As Bailey and Talbot further suggest, when we enter into sports communities as fellow participants "there is no opting out of our relationships with and responsibilities to the sportspeople with whom we share the playing fields...sport puts us in touch with

opponents...but also compels us to recognise, empathise with and be responsible for them (2017: 13). As such, it was not possible nor desirable to maintain a façade of 'academic' distance during my time in the 3SF field.

Oakley also rejects the idea that an interviewee should be seen merely as a source of data, and that the interviewer should not be emotionally involved in the research process. Therefore, given the proximity and nature of the interactions I shared with many players of the game(s) this lack of emotional investment was also not an option. In order to play the game and be immersed in the 3SF field, I necessarily developed strong interpersonal relationships with my research group and continue to feel a responsibility to them in this regard during the writing process.

Further to this responsibility, I acknowledge within my writing that there is no 'pure description' (Sandelowski, 2000: 338) in ethnographic writing, nor one unaffected by the personal connections made in the field. Different researchers can see and interpret the same things differently (see Behar & Gordon, 1995; Erickson & Stull, 1998; Gerstl-Pepin & Gunzenhauser, 2002). However, by implicating oneself (as I have done) within the field of study, the researcher can at least contextualise the conclusions drawn from the project as a whole.

'Conscious Subjectivity'

If we can understand play (through sports or other games) as liminal spaces through which to experiment with relationships to ourselves and others, then the failure to enter into these spaces on the terms of the activity itself would have severely limited my experiences and findings drawn from the field of 3SF (Sterchele, 2016; Pink, 2009). It also could have created a level of disconnection from those I was studying which would affect interview responses. Throughout my research, I therefore adopted a research position which

acknowledged my positionality in the field as an engaged and subjective member of the community.

Whilst I subscribe to the idea that the views of the participants are equal to that of mine, this has not meant I have uncritically accepted or presented their suggestions and responses. Instead, I have employed a form of 'conscious subjectivity'; meaning that through explaining and justifying my analysis as a qualitative researcher I become "accountable for interpretations and their social and political consequences to myself, the participants and the community" (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995: 117).

Therefore, in attempting to provide a responsible, balanced and 'thick' description of the field, I believe my role as ethnographer was to "make sense of the actions and intentions of people as knowable agents...and to attempt to make sense of their 'making sense' of the events and opportunities confronting them in everyday life" (Ley, 1988: 121). Further to this, I align with Reinhartz (1992), who suggests that as long as the ethnographic researcher is self-aware in writing up their findings then these findings are 'useful data'.

A self-reflexive approach to this research project has also been key in acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of my own 'ethnographic presences' (Fetterman 1998). This included from gathering data through to ongoing analysis and the discussion of the game in an academic and public setting (see Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; England, 1994; Fine, 1992; Hertz, 1997; Olesen, 2005; Tedlock, 2000; Van Maanen, 2011). In this regard, I strived to keep my 'presences' as a member of the 3SF community a visible part of the project and in associated presentations. This also has meant transcribing instances during interviews where my presence is referenced directly. This hopefully lays bare my role within the production of knowledge in this project.

If as Willis and Trondman suggest, ethnography is the "disciplined and deliberate witness cum recording of human events" (2002: 5), then the level of immersion in the field I had

over the last three years is a crucial strength of my role as ‘deliberate witness’ within 3SF. This immersion gave me unprecedented access to the 3SF community and enabled a nuanced understanding of the social dynamics at play in and out of the hexagon. However, questions of a lack of distance will always follow embedded projects such as this. In championing an immersive methodology, I in no way wish to foster a claim to access a singular truth or authenticity about 3SF. In this sense it is important to remember that there is no guarantee to ‘backstage knowledge’ simply by becoming involved in a researched subculture as a participant (Manning, 2009). Therefore, my approach aimed instead to bring to the fore the “fluid and contingent nature of the researchers role and identity” (Eppley, 2006: 80).

Giving My Positionality a Sporting Chance

My position in the field was fraught with complexity and at times complicity. I entered the game in its most sporting context, and without prior knowledge of its history or cultural context. I had first heard about 3SF in 2013 and became interested in playing the game after finding a BBC Radio documentary in early 2016. Having played two sided football in competitive amateur leagues at a fairly high level since a teenager, I was inspired by the possibilities of experiencing the chaotic descriptions of the game. However, I had no knowledge of the SI, let alone Asger Jorn, when I became involved in the community as a player. Upon arrival, I was swiftly signed up by New Cross Irregulars after a trial game in London Bridge. Soon after, I had a PhD proposal based on my initial experiences of the sport at the Triball league accepted at the University of Kent. It was therefore common knowledge in the 3SF community in London that I was both an academic researcher and football player from early on in the data collection process, but given the eclectic mix of participants this (to the best of my knowledge) did not prove a barrier to participation.

Notwithstanding some initial enthusiasm about the fact I was researching the game, after the first few months I began to be treated in much the same way as most other players. This

is a great benefit of longitudinal immersive studies in their ability to normalise (to a certain extent) the presence of the researcher in the social milieu (Pink & Morgan, 2013). Further to this, I endeavoured to be as open and honest with all participants as much as was possible as to the aims (as much as they had begun to crystalize) of my project and their potential involvement or implication within this research process. However, in larger social gatherings (i.e. at the 2017 World Cup and surrounding activities), this was not always possible or practical.

As has been suggested by Fleming when immersed in the field you need to negotiate issues of practicality and ethics with 'realistic and pragmatic solutions' (2015: 167). Therefore after most games and 3SF events that I was involved in, I did not want to draw unnecessary attention to my position as a player researcher and made notes (if needed) discretely on my mobile phone. I then wrote up my reflections and recorded these significant details in a research diary or through voice notes, as to do so in the field was not always realistic or conducive to play.

When Not to Do Research? The Importance of 'Being There' in 3SF

Although I align with Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) when they argue that ethnographers should not feel the need to participate in everything that goes on in a research group, the 'sporting' context through which I joined the 3SF community made it necessary to avoid being placed by key informants within one ideological aspect of the game. Given my sporting background, knowledge of football, and technical ability, there was an initial assumption from many of the players in interviews that I was only interested in analysing 3SF as a competitive sport. Equally, having observed the ways in which visiting journalists, television crews and artists (unwittingly) had become caught up in a complex game of mythopoesis at 3SF games in Fordham Park showed me the importance of 'being there' at all available opportunities (Geertz, 1988; Eichberg & Loland, 2010).

My enduring association with New Cross Irregulars has undoubtedly impacted on the data I have been able to gather. This meant that often there was an assumed complicity in criticisms of the various experiential developments of the game, one which remained despite my explanations of relative impartiality as a researcher and a player. With this in mind, my research relied on developing a strong rapport with all participants through maintaining a strong ethnographic presence in each iteration of the game. This meant gaining the trust of those I was playing with to show that I was a committed player and researcher (Bosworth et al., 2005; Jansick, 2000).

Emergent cultural practices such as 3SF, are what can be described as ‘testing families’; ones where the values placed upon the activity are in a constant process of being validated and reassessed by members of the community through ‘test’ and ‘contest’ (see Kretchmar, 1975). Although initially developed to relate the dynamic athletic interactions of ‘point’ and ‘counterpoint’ on the field of play, this can also be applied to the interactions with the researcher in the field. If we understand the ethnographic researcher as a member of the community who holds a vested position of authority in the ultimate production of knowledge about the research subject, then the ‘testing family’ can use this as a way of validating their own perceptions associated to the practice. In reflecting on how this may have affected player responses, it is worth considering how there can be an assumption in participant observation that “the researcher and informants have a shared interest and identity” (Råheim, 2016: 12). This could have prompted partial or tailored responses in interviews that would not be evident with more distanced research. This is an undoubted limitation of my study into 3SF.

Male and Pale? Ethical Issues and Reflexive Approaches in 3SF

Most research into sport and physical culture is done about and by men (often for a predominantly white male audience). Therefore, the task of a feminist researcher is to challenge the gendered assumptions of the data collected. Also, to mitigate the unconscious

bias found in both subject, self and the research process in general (Dilorio, 1989; Hargreaves & Vertinsky, 2007; Pederson et al., 2018; Wax, 1971).

A key concern for my project was understanding and negotiating the effect of my role as a white, heterosexual, male researcher in a predominantly male subculture and the subsequent consequences of this privileged, racialized and gendered position in the ultimate production of knowledge about 3SF (see Cleland & Cashmore, 2011; Messner, 1990, 2010; Wheaton, 2002). Further to this privilege, interviews were often undertaken in all male settings. Occasionally sexist language or crude remarks were also made by participants and were something I felt complicit in as I did not challenge these remarks for fear of distorting the data gathered. I decided that these should be included in the final analyses (where relevant) and I employed ways to anonymise such instances where appropriate. However, the 'patriarchal dividend' (Demetriou, 2001) remains throughout these research encounters and needs acknowledging.

The vestiges of endemic patriarchal oppression were also apparent when reaching out to some of the female 3SFers for interview. In particular, this was found within their reluctance or surprise at being asked to be involved in such research. This surprise was on the basis that these participants didn't think their contributions were important or significant when compared to more dominant figures in the community (the majority of which were male). This highlights an ongoing issue into how the 'subaltern can really speak' in such research (Morris, 2010). Just as McRobbie 'Settled the score', in her critique of the failure to include women in the research of subcultures at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University in the 1970s, my research attempts (in a small way) to become part of the wider effort which aims to address the 'gender blindness' which continues to pervade academia (see Cooky & Messner, 2017; English, 2017; Hargreaves, 1994; Hextrum, 2019; Free & Hughson, 2003; Hooks, 1993; Messner, 1992; Musto, 2017; Wheaton, 2007).

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a descriptive and critical account of my data collection process. It provided a justification and rationale for my sample size, and further detailed the practical decisions that I made whilst in the field and in the interview setting. My methodological approach as a player researcher of 3SF combined practical, reflexive, sensory and embodied knowledge. This attempted to augment, and at times, challenge top-down, assumptive, and remote androcentric research positions. As such, it was an approach which sought to 'learn by the body' and the wider environment (Wacquant, 2014).

The main strengths of my research stem from a contextual and embodied knowledge of the field and an immersion within the 3SF community under study. However, this invested position also had its shortcomings. In this regard, I concede that fields of research remain constructs, which are both limited and shaped by the constraints and inconsistencies of individual researchers and their own embodied 'narrative horizons'. Therefore, my findings only offer a snapshot into the game of 3SF, and are informed by my own 'semantic impertinences'. Further to this, I also acknowledge how ethnographic research is by design intersubjective. As such, my research exists in, and through, a dynamic interplay with others (from outside and within the field), who may well challenge my analysis of the lifeworld of 3SF (Granek, 2013). My research is also problematically defined by a 'patriarchal dividend' and an unconscious bias (which although mitigated against) runs throughout the project.

In the emergence of a 'New Wave of Football Ethnography', Pearson rightly questions what are the biases, values and prejudices held in such immersive research. Moreover, he considers how such methodological approaches may fail to report what is 'normalised' within the group (2016: 2). However, in my position as a player-researcher-body-subject, I believe these limitations, (alongside the obvious strengths) should be embraced. Only through entering into critical conversations about the ambivalent nature of participant observation, and by deconstructing spurious notions of 'objective distance', can we augment epistemological paradigms and practically realise new ways of interpreting and transforming the world. Therefore, with a commitment to 'conscious subjectivity' (and to

relating my findings in an accessible manner), it is hoped that my methodology provides a bridge between the experiences of the researcher in the field, that of other 3SF players, and a wider readership. Also, that it negotiates (to an extent) what has been termed the impossibility of 'ethnographic ventriloquism' (Geertz, 1988: 102).

Analysis



Figure 16. 2nd 3SF World Cup Kassel #1 (Courtesy of DW)



Figure 17. 2nd 3SF World Cup Kassel #2 (Courtesy of DW)



Figure 18. 2nd 3SF World Cup Kassel #3 (Courtesy of DW)



Figure 19. 2014 3SF World Cup Silkeborg (Courtesy of KFUM)

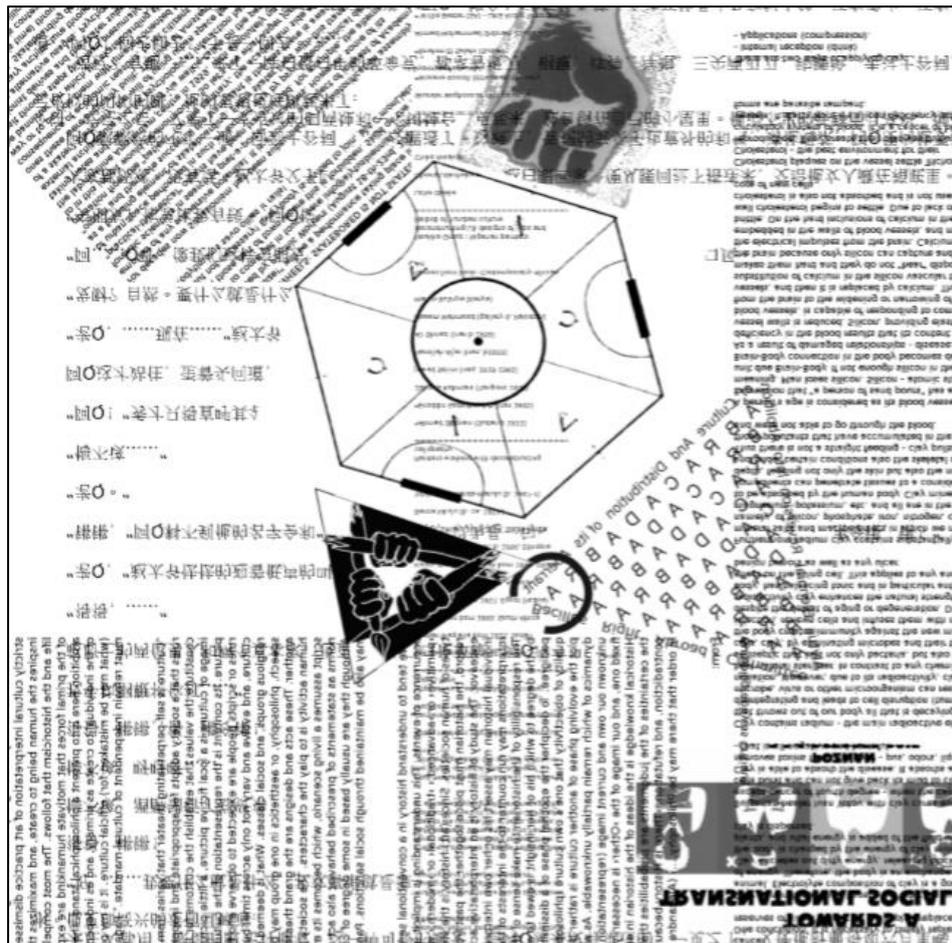


Figure 20. DAMTP 3SF World Cup Publication 2017 (Courtesy of anti-systemic)



Figure 21. Group Photo Deptford October 2018 after the first reformed 3SF London game. (Courtesy of 3sidedfootball.com)



Figure 22. LBDL Match Day CCCP vs SOFC vs Deptford 3SFC 2016 (Courtesy of CC)



Figure 23. Post-Match Tensions Deptford 2017 (Personal Collection)



Figure 24. 2017 World Cup Team Photo New Cross Internationals (Courtesy of DW)

Chapter 5. Definitive Tensions

We didn't find a way 'not to win'.

(Field Notes, 20th August 2017)

On the morning of the 19th of August 2017, final preparations for the 2nd 3SF World Cup were well underway. Whilst many of the teams were still making their way to the venue across town, at the Hessenkampfbahn Athletic Stadium, a core of ground staff from the host club, Dynamo Windrad Freizeitsportclub, were busy meticulously preparing the triolectic playing surface. Six immaculate goals had already been set up on two freshly painted hexagonal football pitches, and flying above the entrance gate was a giant green banner emblazoned with the cerebral tournament motto - 'Think-Three-Sided'.

I arrived at the stadium predictably late, and rushed passed 'Friendship United' - an invitational team comprised of young refugees - who were having a game of head tennis by the pitches. After briefly joining in, I went in search of my teammates who had left me to sleep in at the camp site. As I worked my way through the various team changing rooms, I next came across members of the 'Alytus Biennial Reversion into Abolition of Culture and Distribution of its Aberrant Bacillus Right Abroad – Team' (ABRACADABRA - T for short). These self-proclaimed 'anti-footballers' had snuck into the ground early and were gleefully filling buckets with water and clay ready to be applied as a novel form of action painted team jersey and projectile weapon. Evading their glances (and muddy hands), I eventually located the New Cross International 'team briefing' which was being held in the nearby clubhouse.

As I entered the building, a team mate handed me a 3SF club bag which included various information sheets and tactical plans. Most importantly, our new international strips were

laid out on the table at the front. After ensuring mine was a good fit, I at last sat down to replace my tired looking laces with a more colourful alternative.

Our team-issue rainbow laces had been bought prior to the tournament in order to show New Cross' solidarity with the LGBTQ+ initiative started by Stonewall Football Club in the early 1990s. Through this polychrome adornment to our boots we were aiming to raise awareness of the on-going prejudice and discrimination prevalent throughout football. The associated motto of Stonewall FC states, 'when we all play our part we can make sport everyone's game' (Stonewall, 2017). This was an inclusive and participatory ethos towards football that resonated with our nascent alternative 3SF club. However, as I would discover later that day, trying to create (or maintain) an inclusive sport in 3SF, or one that is 'everyone's game', is a complex task.

After a breakdown of the various formations and strategies we would be employing in pursuit of the trophy, the New Cross team talk turned to the inflammatory and controversial speeches made at the previous evening's opening ceremony. Here, a number of the renegade activist group 'DađA Miners and Travailleuse Psychique', had implored teams to consider how competitive sport was a complicit tool in replicating nationalist power structures and further entrenching exclusory hierarchies in society. The dissenting voices had loudly railed against the 3SF World Cup which they perceived to have been exploited in the service of 'curatorial capitalism' through its close association with the Documenta 14 art exhibition. The disgruntled activist players had stormed the stage and ostentatiously distributed the latest edition of their Letterist newsletter to audience members. They also urged teams present to "find a way not to win" and "destroy Documenta!"

Their impassioned absurdist stance is demonstrated by the polemical Brohm-esque pamphlet excerpt below.

Every stable form off! We are fluid! Each day brings a new day of protest, psychogeographic! We will occupy venues designed for competitive and curatorial capitalism. We see that the dead format of the current three-sided football 'World Cup' can only be overcome by organising as an industrial union- not as sportsmen, not as artists, but by questioning the construction of culture itself - as psychic workers. This allows us to also organise around, attack and overturn related bourgeois constructions such as politics, philosophy, education, sports and any other industrial complex that maintains 'the spectacle'....testing it triectically as far as kicking a ball lets us go!

Unaware of how far the 'trialectic tests' would reach, these defiant creative interventions were met with a mix of bemusement and scepticism by players and dignitaries who had come to celebrate an emerging alternative sport, meet new teams and win a trophy; albeit in a convivial, comradely, and inclusive atmosphere. This was, after all, only the second opportunity for international 3SF silverware following the inaugural 2014 World Cup held in Silkeborg, Denmark: home town of the games founder, Asger Jorn. For New Cross, and a number of like-minded teams, 3SF therefore signified an exciting, politically-engaged form of football, still in its early stages of development.

New Cross Irregulars were a club that had dominated the early seasons of the formalised 3SF League competitions at Fordham Park and again on the Astroturf of the fledgling Triball league at London Bridge. New Cross Internationals 3SFC (as we were called when abroad) therefore wanted to test our sporting credentials against a wider set of 3SF clubs from across Europe. We were a team comprised of skilled footballers who took the game 'seriously' and wanted to compete and win. Not dissimilar to other amateur teams I played for, we also wore full home and away kits replete with club badges and local sponsorship.

When I joined the club in the winter of 2016, I was unaware of how New Cross had also come to exemplify the increasing competitiveness which was accompanying the recent

codification and formalisation of 3SF. Also, the wider efforts that were being made to resist such ludic enclosures. However, when perusing the team list which was pinned on the wall inside the club house in Kassel that August (which included team names such as 'Atlantis Mermaids' and 'Kein Mensch ist Luther Blissett') it became clear to me that there were 3SF players still keen to embrace the more expansive, anarchic 'spirit' put forward at the opening ceremony and resist New Cross' sporting dominance.

The 2017 World Cup began in suitably chaotic fashion. It had transpired that a number of the 3SF teams were in fact fabrications, entered into the tournament to provide 'multi-use' teams in the subversive tradition of the Luther Blissett Project. These were 'autonomous', non-aligned 3SF clubs in which any players, audience and gathered friends and fans could play for, or switch allegiance too, as they saw fit. Once it was established which teams had turned up, or which were to simply form organically as 'anti-organisations', we began play for the day in earnest. Mid-way through a number of group stage games, however, there were repeated attempts to replace the match ball with an inflatable globe which flew impossible distances on the prevailing wind blowing across the pitches. After a brief hiatus (and some heated exchanges between players) it was decided to adhere (largely) to the rules nominally set out in line with previously organised international 3SF competitions.

After this reset, 3SF began to resemble the competitive sport I had first played in London Bridge. But true to recent 'definitive tensions', there were soon further attempts at sporting subterfuge. This included pelting New Cross players with mud each time we entered another team's third of the field and - during the quarter final - enlisting the help of watching teams and audience members to fill an entire goal mouth in order to prevent us from scoring any goals whatsoever!

Despite these considerable obstacles, at the end of a long day of collaboration, collusion and contestation, and after a close run final with two of the more 'sport-oriented' teams, 'Polish Husaria' and 'F2 Versenkt', New Cross won the 3SF World Cup. As with the previous 3SF

World champions, the similarly singular (and former semi-professional team) - Silkeborg KFUM, we hadn't found a way 'not to win'.

We achieved sporting 'success', but had we played the game?...

Introduction

The above narrative extract attempts to encapsulate the contestations which have surrounded 3SF over the last decade. It offers a glimpse into the ontological and semantic uncertainty which is often literally 'at play' on the same pitches, between players who may define the game as a competitive sport, a form of absurdist political praxis and a curatorial curiosity. Moreover, in charting the explosive consequences of these contrasting interpretations, the above account also acts as a springboard into my first analysis chapter which has its focus on the definitive tensions which have characterised the recent trajectory of the game.

As Eichberg contends, every emerging sporting practice or 'body culture' when brought into 'concrete' space is 'blended', 'hybrid' and demands a 'differentiated analysis' (2016: 124). As such, with this 'differentiated' approach in mind and body, it is through his 'trialectic of sports' model that I will frame the syncretism found within contemporary iterations of 3SF. This will further serve to highlight 3SF as an ambivalent 'lived space' which continues to be placed (depending on the context) within what Eichberg terms 'achievement', 'fitness' and 'experiential' sporting spaces.

Following a brief explication of Eichberg's model, this chapter begins with players reflections on how 3SF offered a chance to reach beyond 'binary football' practices in search of recreational, and more 'inclusive' footballing alternatives. Next, it shows how the game represents a limited challenge to what Bourdieu has termed the 'masculine domination'

found in competitive sports (2001) and offers players a chance to 'queer football'. Far from solely a game of liminal liberation and 'inclusive masculinities', the chapter then relates how the codification and formalisation of the game in recent years has concurrently replicated inherited structures and hierarchies of mainstream sport in the pursuit of 'productive' and 'achievement' outcomes.

The 'patriarchal dividend' and 'symbolic violence' which has accompanied such sporting enclosures led to a number of players dropping out of the game in London. In this regard, the final section of this analysis chapter considers how the 'desportized' reforms instituted in the London league demonstrate 3SF as a site of 'practical consciousness'. In this context, players in keeping with a perceived 'spirit of the game' collectively negotiated and resisted against the exclusory consequences of the 'sportization' of 3SF in a quotidian DIY sporting setting.

As Eichberg contends, through the seemingly simple act of kicking a ball, "human beings enter into a complex dialogue with each other and with the environment". Therefore, my first analysis chapter aims (in a broader sense) to show how passing the ball to the opposition within 3SF forces players to enter into complex philosophical conversations about the purpose of 'play' and the exclusory nature of competition and binaries in sport (Eichberg, 1998: 162). In the analysis of such 'complex dialogues', the divergent meanings ascribed to the game offer an enriching case study through which to consider the disparate and ambivalent forms of individual and collective agency found within the social field of alternative sporting practices.

Why Eichberg's 'Triolectic'?

Analysing sport as a stable 'unitary concept', one which is static and homogenous, "reduces the study of sporting cultural practices to mediated images and unquestioned motivations" (Greer, 2001: 2). Therefore, analysed through Eichberg's three stranded paradigm, 3SF can

be seen as a challenge to both discrete and singular definitions of sport. Also, it offers a productive site to consider the competing dynamic definitions of what constitutes and legitimises emergent alternative physical practices from within the study group itself.

Although participants may draw unequally from each strand of Eichberg's triolectic model in their experiences and comprehensions of 3SF, through an analysis of such syncretism, I will show how players necessarily bring to the fore philosophical and practical questions as to what matters when we play sport. Also, how social transformationalist projects in the alternative soccerscape can avoid replicating the very structures and forms which they seek to reject. These questions are crucial when we consider what motivates people to opt-out of competitive 'sport' and find alternatives such as 3SF. Also, how 'radical' these spaces can really be considered.

As educationalist, Alfie Kohn suggests, "that most of us fail to consider alternatives to competition is a testament to the effectiveness of our socialisation...all the joys of play are said to hinge on competitive sport...from our earliest days we are busily absorbing an uncritical acceptance of competition" (2013: 86). Given such uncritical acceptance, (with Eichberg's model in hand) I will therefore chart how efforts to critically 'reject' competition through 3SF has led to a number of 'enriching' and 'destructive' tensions and reflexive reforms for players (Eichberg, 1998: 125). This further points us to the plurality of perspectives and uncertain prospects which constitute such 'counter-cultural' sporting coalitions.

Within Eichberg's 'triolectic of sport' model, 'Achievement space' can be understood as spaces where results and records are 'produced'. Here, hierarchies and productivity are endlessly measured and quantified in line with the values of 'modernity' and the superstructures of capitalism. These 'achievement' oriented sports occur in standardised normative sporting environments characterised by formal regulated fields of play. These spaces nurture a sport of 'straight lines', rules and 'right angles'. They also foster sporting

practices which require rigid and quantifiable definitions of success and failure.

Achievement spaces and practices are therefore characterised by hyper competition and a win-at-all costs binary mentality. They are a sporting 'mono culture'.

'Fitness or Recreational spaces' are sporting contexts where 'achievement' is measured by levels of participation, inclusion, welfare and enjoyment. Also, on the inherent health benefits of physical activity. These 'reproductive' and 'sport for all' environments replicate similar forms and practices to 'achievement' sports. However, their practices emphasise fitness, health and wellbeing. For Eichberg, they occur in 'hygienic' sporting spaces such as municipal parks, schools and recreation grounds. In these sporting spaces and contexts, technical ability is secondary to more holistic inclusive pedagogical outcomes.

'Experiential or Movement spaces' refer to 'a-productive' and 'new wave' physical activities and are performed in associated spaces which emphasise 'sensual experience' over any quantifiable goal. It is a space of 'surprise' and an 'underground' space. Experiential activities include unstructured play, folk games and role-play exploration. They also include carnivalesque activities not bound to strictly controlled or demarcated zones nor within codified regimes or body disciplines. Instead, they are collaborative 'paidic' games which for Eichberg are "characterised by a culture of the curved line, outside on the green or in the street, the labyrinth of dance, the derelict industrial plant, and a spontaneous sport just around the corner" (Eichberg, 1998: 125).

I find Eichberg's triolectic paradigm (described above) a useful narrative tool to frame this first analysis chapter, and a way to systematise and review my findings of a 'sport' which at different times and places can be placed in between each of these spaces. I now begin with those players who considered 3SF as aligned to recreational spaces.

3SF as a Recreation Sport

30 of 44 participants in my research sample expressed that a desire to be involved in a less competitive and more 'inclusive' form of football had led them to play 3SF or seek other alternative sporting contexts. Many of these players were seeking a 'recreational space' where there was less riding on the results and the emphasis was placed on 'fun' and 'fitness'. 12 players had become explicitly tired of the endemic fighting, negative attitudes of team mates or the aggressiveness of Sunday league football. Also, 9 mentioned the competitive seriousness of 5-a-side 'Power-leagues'. 4 had also become disillusioned with the pressures of competitive sport as an adult and only re engaged with football towards their late 20s and early 30s. The jovial and sometimes 'spontaneous' atmosphere found in 3SF proved an alluring prospect for other players seeking a new form of football 'just around the corner'.

The following interview extracts offer examples of how 3SF gave meaning to players when defined and perceived between a 'recreational' and 'experiential' sporting space in Eichberg's triolectic model.

Ben B found the hypercompetitive and macho nature of amateur two sided football as exclusory. For him 3SF was an 'inclusive sport' which encouraged participation.

...honestly, the three sided bit was secondary to me. The thing that appealed to me was that everybody seemed to be having a really good time. The style of play looked a lot less aggressive...it was a bunch of guys having a laugh together in a park and I thought I would be able to join in and be alright in that environment.

(Ben B)

Another London-based player spoke of the difficulties he encountered in the transition from youth team sport towards the aggressive and hyper masculine culture of senior competitive football. For Richard E, 3SF provided a counter to this culture and a new context to play.

I lost faith in the footballing institutions to protect me even in the scale of the school football team...A lot of it was intimidation...I mean generally I'm quite a soft person and if you want to play football as an adult you have to be a lot more hard and aggressive. I couldn't really survive in that environment.

(Richard E)

One former semi-professional football player, had decided to return to football recently before we played together in Fordham Park. Here on the hexagon, Hass had found an inclusive space to enjoy football again. He recalled the pressures which had eventually led him to quit competitive football in his late teens in our interview,

I used to get so nervous, I was light headed...every time I got the ball, I was like, 'if I mess up I'm just gonna get moaned at!'

(Hass)

A Philosophy Football FC stalwart, Omer, also explained the main impetus behind joining the 3SF League in Deptford after a team mate had broken their leg during a two sided Sunday league game. A consequence of witnessing the potential violence of amateur football, the club (and its players) Omer found 3SF as a new 'informal' context to play football.

I just couldn't handle it anymore...so I was looking for something that was just a lot more informal, and I guess just fun... ...(3SF) was the natural progression of what to do next, I mean we didn't want to go down to play and get our bones cracked in the mud...I mean where do you go from there?

(Omer)

In contrast to this response, Matthew, explained how through playing the game he had begun to reflect on how the oppositional and aggressive aspects of two sided football had prevented him enjoying the game in Colombia until he found an inclusive three-sided alternative in London.

I think one of the reasons football didn't appeal to me is because it promoted in young people, especially young boys in school, this notion of going into battle, and we would go against other schools as enemies...and then immediately after those same boys would be sent to war. So binary games engendered these values of binary conflict...

(Matthew)

The above responses suggest that 3SF may be indicative of what Eichberg speculatively determines as 'post-sportist' tendencies in alternative body cultures. These 'post sportist' values offer reflexive and self-aware recreational spaces which focus primarily on nurturing community, health and sociality in contra to an emphasis on competition and results (1998: 145).

The 3SF participant responses also align with studies which show a wider societal trend towards 'inclusive masculinity' found in contemporary competitive team sport practices. As Anderson argues, competitive team sports serve as a crucial sight in determining 'acceptable masculinity' in society. As such, the author develops the concept of 'inclusive masculinity' to show the proliferation of sporting contexts which de-emphasise the values of 'hegemonic/orthodox masculinity' which are defined by hyper competition, binary opposition and physical violence (Adams, 2011; Anderson 2005, 2008, 2009, 2009, 2015, 2018, Cashmore & Cleland 2012; McCormack & Anderson 2018; Swain, 2006). In this sense, participation in 3SF offered an inclusive approach to competitive sport for select players which included a 'plurality of masculinities' and definitions of achievement.

The emphasis placed on 'inclusion' and 'recreation' by 'excessive' 3SF players can also be identified across the alternative soccerscape where there have been a number of concerted efforts to 'de-centre competition' and create more inclusive environments to play (see Kuhn, 2010; Sterchele & Saint Blancat, 2015). It is possible, therefore, that 3SF provides another site in which inclusive masculinities and values of 'de-centered competition' are nurtured away from the hyper masculine values of competitive two sided football.

'Queering Football': 3SF as Beyond Sport

For many players, 3SF 'de-centred' the achievement-oriented values placed on amateur two-sided football. However, the explicit challenges 3SF makes to the binaries of oppositional sport (with the introduction of three teams), also became a way to deconstruct gendered sporting spaces and definitions of sport completely for a small selection of players.

In the 'Edinburgh Situationist Disunited' League, the syncretic nature of the game was a key motivation for play. In this context, despite relatively low numbers (usually between 5 and 8) they play 3SF on a weekly basis in various parks in the city. The teams are mixed-gender and mixed ability with matches that emphasise participation, or in their words 'exploring green spaces' and 'having fun and kicking a ball'. When I collectively interviewed a selection of Edinburgh-based players following a thrilling 6-6-6 game in Pilrig Park, they did not define 3SF as a sport as such.

Regular organiser and attendee, Ainslie thought that it was important to frame 3SF as 'beyond sport'.

How about don't view this as a sport. More like an activity...because sport had too many negative connotations if we call it a sport, I want to expand the catch for people.

(Ainslie)

For Timothea, 3SF in Edinburgh was also a practice that defied existing sporting categories and was a way to engage with recreation beyond that defined by excellence and achievement. As she interjected in our group interview,

...people are put off by the idea of sport...I would never have fucking got into football if I thought that what I was doing with youse in a park was a proper sport!

(Timothea)

Equally for Robin, (a non-binary 3SFer and ardent Sainkt Pauli FC supporter), the free flowing emphasis of the games in Edinburgh offered a space to engage with playing football in an inclusive, non-aggressive and non-competitive way. It allowed them a way to enjoy 'football' for the first time. The expressly collaborative nature of the 'Disunited' games nurtured a sense of fun and safety for Robyn that being 'bad' was ok, or even better, celebrated!

...I liked that a lot because it was more than just football, it was fun and chill, and it didn't matter that I was completely shit and couldn't really kick the ball...I was never allowed to play football at school because I was the wrong gender...I never thought that football was for me until very recently. Watching or playing it was not for me... because of like....its very...I always felt that it is just laddy and scary.

(Robin)

How the game of 3SF confronted expectations of players and spectators alike (who expected to see 'sport' practiced in a 'serious' and 'competitive' way) motivated Robin to keep playing. However, it also resonated with other aspects of their life. Just as 3SF subverted the arbitrary binary opposition model inherent to competitive team sports practice for other players, for Robin, it also challenged wider culturally constructed binaries and heteronormative gender stereotypes. As they further explained,

Fucking with people's perceptions in that way...perceptions of what sport should be, is really fucking brilliant. I love it...I love it when I say I play 3SF, and then you have to have this big conversation. It's almost like to me ...as a queer person, really similar to being queer...its queering football! I love that...like really changing people's perceptions of something in that way...saying "this isn't going to behave as you thought it would. You can no longer dictate how this is gonna go" ...I've disrupted your way of thinking, and that is really satisfying. I've got really used to that as a non-binary person and I really relish it.

(Robin)

Aside from the pleasure taken in 'queering football' itself, Robins words show the complex meanings which are invested into the dynamic form of 3SF. These recreational and experiential investments act as a way to challenge wider cultural expectations and sporting norms. In explaining the game to others 3SF players are also asserting and embodying a wider political 'queer' identity, one that rejected singular conceptions of sport and the body. In this sense, playing the game is a form of what Eichberg would describe as an 'inner experience'. This experience has the ability (as a recreational and an experiential space) for players to 'surprise themselves and others through play' and is therefore a site of agency and embodied 'practical consciousness' (Eichberg, 1998: 124).

In Deptford, South London, defining 3SF as an 'inclusive' sporting space that 'queered football' also resonated with Juliet, a trans-women who played regularly for SOFC between 2016 and 2018 in the Luther Blissett Deptford League. The overtly anti-homophobic

language which described the game as reversing the 'homo erotic/phobic dualism' of two-sided football in early editions of the LPA newsletters spurred her to play the game. As she further explained,

I was always a massive football fan and then became aware of Situationists and the Avant-Garde at the same time as having this sort of 'Queer' identity...but I still really liked football, so I was very interested to find football cultures that wouldn't exclude me...

Like Robin, she saw participation in 3SF as a way of playing with cultural expectations of gender through alternative sport. It was also a way of finding acceptance within the liminal zone between sport, avant-garde culture and queer identity. In this regard, 3SF's dynamic position within the triolectic model reflected the ability to ask wider questions of what sport could mean in society.

...(3SF) also intersects with the LGBT stuff because again if you are deviating from like psychological norms, sport doesn't have that much time for you...(3SF)... is this space of ambiguity, ambivalence, doubt, and tentativeness, of not knowing what you are going to find until you find it, you know, this contrasts with sport, and particularly football...which relies on these certainties and this unimpeachable self-confidence.

Having also been an active member of the 'Gay Sports Network' with the prominent clubs of Brighton Bandits and East London Phoenix, Juliet found the convivial atmosphere and sense of inclusive community in South London 3SF as comparable to alternative football spaces, where ideas of competition and achievement were also being questioned, or critiqued from below.

...questions (of identity) don't feel as relevant and that's good, I think. I mean I find it really hard imagining feeling excluded from the 3SF circuit for being a trans-woman or whatever. Its a really nice atmosphere at the Fordham park games, you know people are really friendly...it is really nice that the kind of form of the thing makes space for that...

(Juliet)

As Eng suggests "the concepts of queer and queering are useful analytical tools for interrogating hegemonic and powerful laws about how we act and speak" (2006: 67). In this regard, from the above player testimonies, participation in 3SF can also be seen as an act which interrogates the hegemonic structures and values which frame and limit how players are able to play and interact on the football field. Also, they expose the limited forms of inclusive football which are available to social actors in contemporary culture.

Through a three-sided approach to football, 3SF not only bears the hallmarks of a trend towards inclusive masculinity, but, it is also able to 'de-stabilise material social relations' in an embodied everyday context (Nelson, 1999). As such, in providing this site of sporting inclusion, experience and recreation, new values are placed upon this cultural practice on the terms of those who play it.

If we understand the body in physical culture as a 'battleground' where legitimate types and uses of bodies are constantly at stake, then 3SF potentially offers an embodied space to make 'visible' the domination found in normative practice. In this sense, my findings suggest that 3SF is also representative of a conscious reflexive move away from the 'cult of masculinity' traditionally associated with two-sided football (see Anderson, 2010; Gaston, et al 2018; Skelton, 2000).

Whether ‘queering football’ or reaching ‘beyond’ existing sporting paradigms, the above section has demonstrated how the act of playing triolectic football became meaningful for participants unable to find comparable ‘recreational’ and ‘experiential’ spaces through which to test at sporting boundaries and taxonomies. In this regard, players reflected on how 3SF also challenged cultural assumptions about sport, gender and identity. This demonstrates how participation in an ‘inclusive’ and ‘recreational’ alternative form of football has the ability to in a number of ways, “lay bare the invisibilization that makes sport such an important arena for the maintenance of, or challenge to, masculine domination” (2017: 122).

3SF as Achievement Sport

Whilst my findings (in part) show how the liminal and dynamic nature of 3SF offered participants a site of sporting ‘inclusion’ and ‘recreation’, it is also important to critically consider whether it is possible for such ‘underground’ or alternative sporting activities to refigure or transform the wider discourses which surround competitive team sport (Pronger, 1998). In other words, I also sought in my interviews to discover how 3SF had also been developed and framed by players within a normative sporting discourse and competitive context. Also, what narratives about the game emerged from players within these ‘achievement oriented’ spaces.

In this regard, for 29 of the 44 participants (predominantly involved in the London Leagues) the game existed in the space between an ‘achievement’ and ‘recreation’ sport. For these players the reproduction of inherited structures and value systems of competitive two sided football were a crucial and valued part of its ‘legitimate’ practice. Indicative of this interpretation, the following section details examples of how the game was perceived, experienced and defined as a competitive sport.

For Khairil, 3SF needed sporting structures, competitive hierarchy and quantifiable goals to have meaning as a game.

...I love the potential of sport but I've never thought of three-sided as anything other than a sport. I look at it as a competitive sport, when all is said and done its the teams that have the most skill and are the most coordinated who will win, and yes you can talk about 'the philosophy', but for me, a lot of that is all wishy washy. I started playing in earnest when the league was being put together because suddenly there was something worth playing for...

(Khairil)

Owen, first got involved in 3SF during the London 'triolympic' protest games in 2012. He also reflected on how formalisation and increased competition in London was a positive moment for a sport that he wants played across Europe as a legitimate counterpart to two sided football.

When I'm playing I want to win! I don't know how to play a sport without wanting to win...For me a watershed moment was when things were codified and we had a competitive league. That meant it could progress as a sport.

(Owen)

Hass expressed admiration for the competitive set-up he initially found at Fordham Park which he described as a 'legitimate' sporting space, with its own goals and pitch markings. Also the formalised teams clearly had 'a club history' and distinct identity which was key. For him, the competitive league structure gave 3SF a form of 'doxic logic' as a sport, which has since been lacking as these structures have been taken away by the wider playing community.

Because you guys (New Cross) were competitive so it meant that I had to play at a decent level, there was challenges and it obviously meant...there's some good players here - like you Ben - that I can challenge myself against. If it had been one of these 'friendlies' I probably wouldn't have come down regularly, coz' nowadays the ball is just getting kicked out of play...

(Hass)

As the above responses indicate, 3SF was given 'productive' meaning by the 3SF community as a recognisable form of sport during its codification and formalisation in London. Here hierarchies, outcomes and structures were introduced. These ludic developments and definitions gave the game meaning to those who framed 3SF within normative sporting paradigms.

The formalisation of 3SF as positioned predominantly between an achievement and recreation practice began with the establishment of the Deptford League in 2012. In this structured form it undoubtedly had appeal for those looking for a new form of 'football' with something tangible to play for and compete within. However, indicative of the tensions involved in the enduring social life of alternative sports, the introduction of competitive teams and hierarchies also excluded 3SF players who were seeking an experiential space to play football without the same quandaries over productivity, outcome, and attainment (see later).

Having the various interpretations of the game coalesce on the same field of play was confronting for some of the newly arrived members of the community who expected that everyone should adhere to the newly formed competitive sporting 'rules'. Indicative of this, Miguel of Inter Melon, recalled how the competing visions and definitive tensions of 3SF brought people into conflict and confronted competitive attitudes for some achievement oriented players.

...all of a sudden I was trying to win a game and this person was in harm's way, it was not funny, it was disruptive...Why would you go and disrupt a football match dressed as a mermaid handing out cards saying "now you can't speak for two seconds" ...Just go away! I'm playing...When we realised she was part of the game we just ignored her...If it is just disruption for disruptions sake I don't see the point. Or maybe that was the competitive side of me going, no,no,no,no,no.....maybe that was the point!

(Miguel)

Despite the apparent desire for more 'inclusive' contexts to play football (which was articulated by the vast majority of participants), as 3SF became organised into league competitions and standardised teams it also began to reproduce structures and values akin to normative competitive binary team sports. These developments (conscious or otherwise) produced what Connell would describe as a 'Patriarchal Dividend'. Here less-competitive or achievement driven 3SFers (of all genders) began to drop out or play alternative games. This 'Patriarchal dividend' is one in which male participants benefit from inherited structures and practices, despite not being involved in their construction or even being staunchly opposed to such developments (1989). In charting this development in the game, we can identify the difficulties of realising 3SF as a 'concrete' and inclusive phenomenon, which was shaped to accommodate the needs of a wider social group seeking achievement and recreational sporting spaces.

As Cudd further reminds us, "the problem with competitive games in a competitive society is that even simulated, recreational forms of competition can quickly escalate into the dimension of the 'deadly serious'" (2007: 57). This 'deadly seriousness' accompanied aspects of the codification, formalisation and increased competition within the game over the last 5 years. However, that the majority of achievement oriented 3SF players did not find codification and competition as a negative development but crucial in the games' history as a 'legitimate' sport, shows how despite the alternatives sporting paradigms 3SF is

able to offer, inherited sporting logics and practices remain key factors in the popular diffusion and enclosed development of the game.

Symbolic Violence and Inherited Structures in 3SF

Enclosing 3SF within a 'legitimate' codified competitive sporting paradigm (and associated achievement spaces) led to the largest regular participation of the game at Triball, and in the initial seasons at Fordham Park. It also provided an intelligible sporting form and logic. However, in the long term, this 'productive' shift excluded a number of people who viewed the game in more experiential or recreational paradigms. Here we can analyse 3SF from a structural perspective to show how the introduction of competition occludes participation and also may reproduce elements of 'Hegemonic Masculinity' in alternative football contexts (Connell 1990, 2005, 2012, 2013; Light and Kirk, 2000).

As Van Ingen suggests, "research on sport and space cannot ignore the ways in which spaces are inexorably linked to the social construction of dominant ideologies and to the politics of identity" (2003: 210). Therefore, it is apt to further consider that despite 3SF offering a practice for players to counter the oppositional binaries of the two sided game (for some), the reproduction of inherited sporting structures and competitive values in the League competitions was a form of 'symbolic violence' for the game. This 'sportization' created a structural barrier to participation and inclusion. As I discovered during my interviews, this exclusory logic had seriously affected various members of the 3SF community (whose responses follow this section).

Structural exclusion and masculine domination cannot be undone through purely linguistic means or abolished by an act of 'performative magic' (Bourdieu, 1991: 171). As such, Dworkin and Messner suggest, that "simply deconstructing our discourse about binary categories does not necessarily challenge the material basis of master categories to which subordinate categories of people stand in binary opposition: the capitalist class, men,

heterosexuals and whites” (2002: 25). In this regard, expressions of inclusivity or solidarity by players through 3SF were therefore not sufficient for creating a ‘sport for all’ when faced with the reproduction of pre-existing exclusionary structures embedded within other ‘legitimate’ contemporary competitive team sport practices.¹⁸

As Wheaton has further suggested in relation to the comparable gendered dynamics at play during ‘the sportisation’ of lifestyle sports, “activities have become and remain masculinized through the depositing of “dominating” schemes of perception and meaning” (2004: 3). These ‘dominating schemes’ must be considered in how alternative practices (such as 3SF) can move towards the quantification and codification of achievement in Eichberg’s triolectic. Also, how this shift towards ‘legitimacy’ may exclude or side-line players from the field of play.

Bourdieu and Passeron’s notion of ‘symbolic violence’ offers a further framework to understand the replication of practices of ‘legitimate authority’ found within 3SF (1977). In their work they cogently argue that ‘masculine domination’ must not be understood solely in the actions of individuals in the social field, but they are also embedded within the inherited structures which govern culturally accepted forms of practice. These inherited structures offer powerful symbolic hierarchies and forms. In this sense, we can ask how various players (including myself) saw nothing un-natural in the ‘legitimised authority’ of the competitive codification of 3SF. The unconscious pursuit of records and quantification within 3SF therefore may reflect “the ways strategizing agents act from a variety of structured and structuring positions to more or less reproduce existing configurations of privilege” (Schubert, 2002: 1092).

¹⁸ New Cross, for example, for all of our inclusive desires, are still a team of heterosexual white men who despite seeking to reach beyond the standard sporting paradigms also were implicit in the replication of the exclusory values of competitive sport. We also enjoyed a patriarchal dividend from our singular approach to the game.

In other words, the structural development of the competitive sport of 3SF and the dominant needs of the social field ended up producing the very structures that limited inclusion and participation in other sporting normative practices. My findings therefore suggest that the recent sportization and codification of 3SF is reflective of how emergent sporting practices, however counter cultural in intention, may be shaped to meet ‘the realities encountered in the expectations of modern sport’ (Hunter, 2004: 178).

However, a purely structural analysis relating to the wider introduction of ‘doxic’ sporting logics into 3SF, does little justice to the ways in which various players have resisted or have negotiated such developments. As Hargreaves suggests, this deterministic stance “fails to appreciate how cultural fields, such as sports, contain the capacity for people/women to resist and change social/gender relations” (1994: 21). With this thought in body and mind, the following section details how players perceived and reflected upon the symbolic violence of 3SF’s codification. It also shows how competing interpretations of the game (and the deliberate anti-achievement interventions employed by some 3SF players) can also point to the collective and individual capacity to break from such hegemonic structures and habits (or at least loosen them for a time).

3SF as an Experiential and Reflexive Space

A prominent minority within 3SF (10 participants) actively rejected both recreational and achievement spaces in their experiential interpretations and experiences of the game. Although the political significance of their interventions are expanded upon in Chapter 6, the following section highlights how their actions (and reflections) contributed and shaped recent reforms and produced new contexts for the game in London and beyond. Also, how the codification of the game offered them a form of practical consciousness about the ‘deadly seriousness’ found in normative competitive football.

Jana - a self-defined 'Femocrat' politician (and New York-based performance artist), returned to London in early 2017 to 'referee a competitive game' of 3SF for the first time. In our interview she related her shock at seeing the transition of the game from an experiential artistic activity into a 'serious' competitive sport. The prevalence of 'competitive men' stood in stark contrast to the dada-inspired interventions at the 'Match to Smash Serious Culture of Bourgeoisie and White Supremacy', where she had first played the game. Jana found the formalisation of 3SF in London as indicative of the exclusory nature of patriarchal capitalist culture in general. As she explained,

...I don't see 3SF as a football game, I see it as an opportunity to create performance art...so I was kind of put off by all this masculine energy and their seriousness. Isn't 3SF...I mean its already, its so clear, that its a concept that is absurd and fun and whimsical but all you guys took it so seriously...It felt like there was not much space for playfulness...Ultimately it was kind of funny that men can take...er...Dada... Situationist ideas and turn it into something so deadly serious...it felt slightly, I don't know...it feels like very industrial and mechanical and its probably a reflection of the way of our culture, where everything that is great and festive and individual becomes institutionalised...

(Jana)

Although Jana was able to laugh at the 'increasing seriousness' of the competitive games of 3SF, she also saw implications for this achievement orientation as replicating and reproducing the values of competitive sport which removed multiple forms of creative expression. For her, this enclosed the meaning of the game and excluded those who didn't fit in with the competitive sporting paradigm. Jana travelled to Kassel in order to interrupt the sporting hegemony. In doing so she scored a remarkable fin propelled penalty whilst over five months pregnant and dressed as a Mermaid. This shows 3SF players 'excessive' commitment to the non-sporting development of the game.

Florina also felt excluded by the androcentric 'sporting' environments of 3SF at Deptford and Kassel. For her the formalisation of the game was antithetical to its 'roots'. Reflecting on the ways in which 3SF had drifted into traditional normative sporting structures, she also questioned why people would want to define 3SF as a competitive sport, as she perceived it as a form of political play.

...its hard for me to have a perspective of three-sided as a sport. I know some people think its a sport, I can't disagree with them, I can't agree either obviously, as I hate sports and I would never play them...I'm a very anti-competition person so I have a totally different perspective than a lot of people...I mean you might as well just play two sided...like, what is the point?! Three sided supposedly brings something else to the table. If you're gonna play with the same attitude as a normal game of football, you might as well just play that and get it over with.

Florina was also a vocal critic of the structures adopted from mainstream sport which (re)created divisions between players and opposing teams in 3SF. The changes she observed in the league from the side lines in London gave her confirmation of what was endemically wrong with other organised sports. It was a development, for her, that should be resisted within 3SF through absurdist tactics that she had employed in Kassel.

...I remember thinking...where is all the women? I can't play!...there were some kids in the Polish team sometimes, but that was pretty much it. I was pretty like scared to play because people were quite serious...when you know, if they lost and they won, there was a lot of feeling there...The league itself has created this atmosphere, and I don't know, it was a bit of too much masculinity overflowing into the space and it excluded anybody else. I think that was very visible in the World Cup in Kassel...as you know because you were there!

(Florina)

2 other participants involved in the establishment of the 'Invisible 3SF League' also commented on how the introduction of hierarchy in Fordham Park led them to reflect the exclusory nature of sport. For them, 3SF was about resisting these sporting forms and achievement outcomes. In this context the game offered a site of consciousness about these structures.

Alex had first played the game in 2016 through 'Anti-University Now', an enterprise "borne of a collective desire to create and sustain safe autonomous spaces for radical learning that follow, nurture and enact anti-capitalist, anarchist, feminist, anti-racist, de-colonial, anti-fascist, queer, trans and sex workers inclusive values through conversation and direct action" (Anti-university, 2017). In this non-competitive context, 3SF formed part of 'direct political action' in a series of 'practical workshops on triolectics'.

Alex blamed the adoption of inherited structures of two sided football for creating the tensions in the game during the 2017/18 season.

...its the whole system itself, it kind of reproduces this masculinity which discourages, women, children, old people to play...or even less competitive men. I myself have never participated in the league and I take pride in that... because it is just not something that as a system I agree with...I think that it was an experiment and it was good that it ended...

(Alex)

Asim, also lamented how competitive sporting iterations of 3SF had closed off an activity which had taken years to nurture away from traditional sporting structures and binary achievement values. He had actively intervened in this doxic development most prominently in Kassel and Madrid through the parallel organisation of alternative games of 3SF across the cities.

(3SF) had become very orthodox and very structured...too locked down and very competitive...and that was a natural result of those structures...It shows that the process can be totally destructive. It takes a lot of care and trust to build that into something, to develop that into something different...look, we've seen what happens with league tables in three sided. The moment you have it, it becomes hyper-hierarchical!

(Asim)

Refs or No Refs! Triballs and Tribulations in London 3SF

As previously detailed, the institution of the competitive 3SF league in 2014 had initially proved successful in getting more people involved in the game in London. Even in the opening two seasons many of the anarchist, Situationist and dada-oriented players had used the opportunity of the league to play with players expectations of the sport through elaborate (and purposefully obtuse) systems of rewarding triolectic 'success' based on teams contributions of neutrality (see fig. 13). However, over time these innovations and interventions led to open confrontations on the field of play between those players seeking more productive forms of achievement. Here we uncover the differentiated tensions which can occur as alternative sports shift and develop within the triolectic model.

When 3SF teams were fighting for crucial wins in the league, players were stretching the limits of acceptable behaviour across the spectrum. In the final season of the League format in 2017 this had affected many participants enjoyment. There was a sharp decline in players, as the 'fun' was being taken from the games and calls for the institution of referees were being made by some players. At this time, a breakaway league called Triball was established in London Bridge which could accommodate such requests. This was where I first played the game (see fig. 7).

At Triball the atmosphere was friendly, but there was a consensus that teams were there to win and compete. We had FA accredited referees, regular teams and a league table and a championship to play towards. As a proficient two-sided footballer I found the standard similar to competitive leagues in London I had played in. Numbers were good throughout the first season (over 30 players each week, although all male) and there were excitable discussions about the 'progression' of the game post-matches between the various teams. Positions were being formulated and named, and there were heated debates as to how best to regulate the game dynamics through tri-throw-ins and tri-corner kicks.

However, despite the evident successes of Triball, the need to breakaway from Fordham Park was seen by those who had played in multiple contexts as a problematic move for the sport. In this sense, we can further consider and locate the sites of consciousness which are at play as emerging sporting practices such as this emerge and evolve.

Ben B founded the Triball league at the same time as he completed his football coaching badges. In our interview, he further reflected on how the introduction of competition had changed the 'spirit' of 3SF in London.

...it was really promising that there was this new strand of three sided that could grow. But it was a very different sport. It was a different creature...we thought the natural growth of the game was to go into formalised teams and have formalised leagues, it just seemed obvious at the time. But it was killing the 'spirit'...it got to the point where we were getting injuries and bloody noses, and so not what the sport was supposed to be about...

(Ben B)

The aim of Triball (according to its founders) was to raise the profile and popularity of the game beyond what was described by one player as a 'leftist art pocket' in South London. John was a passionate advocate of the sporting form of 3SF found at the Triball league, and saw that iteration as the only way to secure the long term future of the game. However, he also described how something was lost from the game in this new productive context.

We were trying to create a new sport that could be socially much more open and progressive...but could also be a sport and could also grow and draw people in... But we tried to 'sportificate' it, we drifted away from the base that created three-sided, which was the collection of artists who had invented this amazing thing...(in those contexts) There wasn't enough of a structure around it 'beyond that' to be able to sustain it though...

(John)

Mark M of Inter Melon summed up the existential tensions and dilemmas involved in how best to engender participation, sustain interest and create inclusive sporting environments from below at Triball. For him, 3SF needed outcomes and rules for a wider audience, but the replication of competitive outcomes and structures of football made the game 'something else' which was antithetical to its 'alternative' aims.

...as soon as it becomes a league it sort of dies...but you need something to hook people in, if you want serious players, decent players and if you want people to take it seriously...you can't just get rid of all the rules, because people won't get it, it would be too much....

(Mark M)

The above reflexive responses from participants who played in the Triball league further highlight the creative tensions and existential quandaries which shape alternative sporting practices as they shift within Eichberg's triolectic. Also, as emergent sports seek a

sustainable and popular long term space and form. As 3SF emerged and found form and structure in line with the norms of two sided football in London it was perceived (by players across the interpretive spectrum) to have lost a key part of its 'alternative' identity.

This ontological uncertainty related to how the game could reach a wide demographic of committed players whilst also retaining the subversive intent which was tied to its framing as an experiential political device. With this unresolvable uncertainty in mind, my chapter now moves on to question how 3SF players developed the 'reflexive' reforms that were collectively instituted in Deptford following the Triball League and experiences in Madrid in 2018. Further, what forms of consciousness were found in these reformed contexts?

Reflexive 3SF Reforms and 'Practical Consciousness' in LBDL

Engendering social transformationalism in the alternative soccerscape takes work. Following the 2017 World Cup in Kassel (and the 2018 Madrid tournament) for a number of months in London there were only a handful of players turning up to League games in Deptford. Barely enough for 2 players a side. Triball was on hiatus and there was an increasing awareness amongst the wider playing community that in order to address the dwindling player numbers, something needed to be done to keep the sport alive in England. In an effort to temper the conflicting ideological conceptions of the game, at the beginning of the 2018/2019 season, there were a number of reforms developed collectively as a way to prevent some of the above issues around competition and 'deadly seriousness' from occurring again. It was decided (over long email discussions and meetings) that existing teams were to be dissolved (aside from at formal World Cups and showcase events) and that the 'league' would be redesigned as a series of regular randomised 3SF games. Here, teams would be formed based on what suit of clubs players pulled from a deck of cards which was presented at the start of each match. Although the league table remained, due to the random nature of the teams each month, the format began to remove the sporting 'triball-ism' which had begun to permeate the game in recent seasons.

Whilst these reforms frustrated some of the achievement oriented 3SFers yet to win the league, it also led to a regained sense of community and fun for players, one which tempered competitiveness in favour of creating a “fluid, open and heterogeneous communitas” (Saint-Blancat & Sterchele, 2015: 192). Player numbers were demonstrably boosted by this reformist recreational approach too, as many participants felt able to come down to play without an affiliated team and feel welcome and included. Indicative of this revival, numbers throughout 2018-2020 were consistently between 15-20 players in Deptford (see fig. 21).

Indicative of this spirit of reform, many ‘sporting’ 3SF players at Fordham have embraced the renewed sense of fun and increased participation brought about by such changes. Rob echoed this reflexive sentiment. Despite previously wanting to win the league competition (to such an extent that he had recruited a number of ex-Crystal Palace FC youth team players), he saw the decentred reforms as a necessary part of 3SF and its unique approach as an ‘alternative’ sport.

We were just as guilty as the others of wanting to win and taking some of the fun out of the games...So I think the idea of going back to fun friendlies brings in more people....I was very sceptical at the start. I was like “no we haven’t won it yet”...but then that would defeat the whole idea of playing 3SF wouldn’t it? Which is this notion of football breaking...er...having this triolectic to formulate!

(Rob)

Equally, the ‘re-formulation of the triolectic’ was also observed from the sidelines by Jilly in our interview, who has been regularly attending games as a spectator, time keeper and avid 3SF supporter since 2015. For her, the reforms to the game were a welcome and noticeable change for the 3SF community in London.

...when people became more competitive that didn't seem to me what it was all about...they were playing it like ordinary football which can get very aggressive...(the reforms) have taken all that away. It's made it less cohesive and I can see in some ways it lacks something...but they are all there for the joy of it. Not to win. Winning isn't the most important thing somehow. Generally it is that competitive bit that propels most sports along...always competing, competing, competing...so its nice to see something done just for the joy of it!

(Jilly)

Since reforming the Deptford league, players who had previously only stuck to a single team have mixed with a wide range of other 3SF players. Also, the atmosphere has encouraged interested onlookers to become involved regularly in the games (some of whom have been interviewed for this research project). Representative of this new approach, Simon thought the changes to the league were more in keeping with the 'cooperative spirit of the game' (despite only playing for the first time 3 months previous to our interview together).

Everything is so competitive...and the way we conceptualise everything is always so competitive...I guess its alien to be collaborative and decide by committee...As soon as it gets competitive, it starts to lose what it is all about, as soon as you drop someone for not being good enough its lost it!

(Simon)

Disjunctive Drop Outs and Triolectic Tensions

Whilst the above responses demonstrate the ongoing issues involved within DIY football projects, how transformational resistance can be nurtured (from below) within alternative football movements, this optimistic approach to the collective reforms to the game have not

been shared across the playing community. Thus it remains a fragmented social field. A number of 'achievement oriented players have since grown frustrated at the lack of intensity at Fordham since the institution of league reforms. This shows how 'desportized' quotidian contexts can still exclude or alienate players from the activity. Also (and relating back to Bourdieu) we can understand that these 'desportized' contexts produce moments where players may feel like a 'fish out of water' in a new sporting environment which clashes with the players expectations and previous experiences of normative sport.

Indicative of this, Hass expressed how he stopped playing due to the lack of seriousness and coherence in 3SF. For him, competing is a key part of participation in sport and without that there was a disjunctive playing experience.

I just don't see the point in playing sport like that really...you don't get an adrenaline rush...I mean if it's not competitive, I'm not giving my all. Its just half-hearted you know. Its like, what is the point... you've got to deal with competitiveness.

(Hass)

This disjunctive sentiment was also echoed by Khairil who felt that the new league system had stunted the progression of the 'sport'. He questioned the motives of those seeking to reform the game, and has only been involved sporadically since the 2017 World Cup. Khairil was not optimistic for the long term prospects of 3SF within a new 'de-sportized' context.

...it has gone backwards from the league...when its mentioned as a friendly that progression is halted...If you don't have the level of competition then what's the point...I have frankly very little interest to play 3SF in the woods or with triangular goals...I take great pride in calling myself competitive, and I think there is nothing wrong with it if you harness it correctly and use it at the right times...otherwise you

are just exploring art, and art in my eyes is elitism because its not being approachable!

(Khairil)

The contrasting responses I gathered about the reflexive reforms and alternative 'desportized' iterations of the game in London, demonstrate how 3SF players have actively confronted what the 'natural' (doxic) or 'legitimate' growth of the game within the normative structures of achievement sport can do to its 'trialectic' spirit. These creative tensions were something which was touched upon in almost every other interview. These are further represented below in the words of established players who have seen the game contort, expand and retract over the last decade as various social actors have played and shaped the game on their own terms.

I think 3SF is still in that kind of primordial soup stage. I think whereby you know we are still working out what it is about really. I mean is it a proper sport? Is it more an art installation? I don't know...

(Will)

3SF acts as this blank canvas. Everyone brings their own truth... and that tension is essential!

(Mark D)

Here within the 'primordial soup' of an emerging alternative sporting practice there have been a number of explosive reactions to acts of enclosure, codification and competitive 'sporting' interpretations of the game. These point to the essential trielectical tensions of

the 'fully lived' experiences of playing 3SF as at once a site of symbolic violence, productive meaning and practical consciousness.

Conclusion

This chapter has placed 3SF (however uneasily) within Eichberg's triolectic of sport model. This was in order to give the reader a broad survey of the contested social field my research was undertaken within. It has also appraised what factors have governed its recent trajectory, and which players continue to have access to the game in these various contexts. Within such a 'differentiated' analysis, my findings suggest that 3SF is representative of the symbolic power of inherited sporting practices, and also the oblique forms of bottom up resistance (or practical consciousness) which can be located within the social transformationalism of the alternative soccerscape.

3SF is a practice through which social actors are redefining ludic play in the 21st century. As such, I further align with the foundational work of Eichberg, which champions the study of the interrelationships between play, sport, and the body as a way to re-launch critical theory in the quest for a 'bodily democracy' (2015). In this sense, this chapter has demonstrated how the 'lived spaces' of sport (as much as other emergent forms of alternative body culture) are dynamic and heterotopic spaces. Also, that the syncretism within 3SF provides us with a case study into the complexity of human experience, which is in itself often ambivalent, liminal and contradictory.

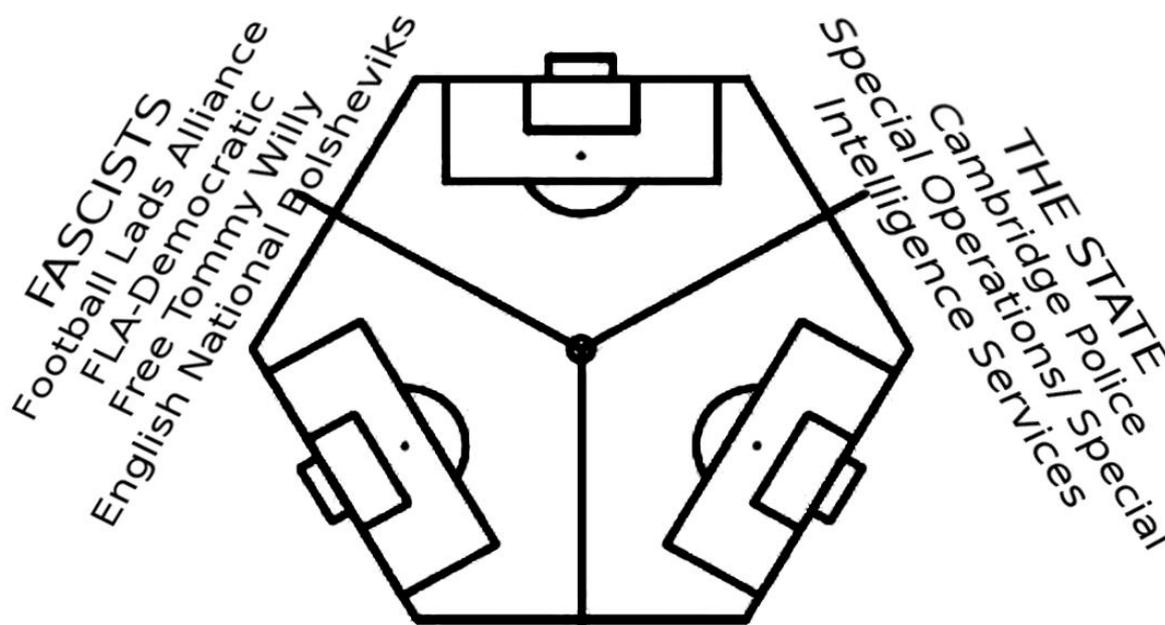
The hexagonal fields of play in London and Edinburgh may have provided players with a 'recreational space' and a site of 'experiential' consciousness through which to contest and subvert sporting norms and values; be that through 'queering football', 'de-centering competition', or 'inclusive masculinity', however, these same 3SF fields also provided a site of productive meaning (albeit temporarily) for those in search of sporting legitimacy and 'achievement' outcomes. The disjunctive tensions within 3SF as to how best to uphold the

‘triolectic spirit’ of the game in these contexts consequently led to difficult philosophical and practical conversations between individual players and teams in the 3SF community. These pertained to whether the introduction of structure and hierarchy would sustain 3SF in the long term, or, if there are other paths which alternative sporting practices can take. These issues go on to form the following analysis chapters and show the further difficulties in instituting a DIY triolectic sport in a binary world.

In this regard, it was important in Chapter 5 to remain critical of how the binaries and symbolic forms of exclusion found in competitive football have been reinforced and reproduced in competitive 3SF contexts. My findings show 3SF (as experienced as a codified competitive sport) is reflective of the enduring cultural obsession with notions of ‘measurement’, ‘progress’ and quantifiable, ‘productive’, ‘binary’ outcomes in competitive team sports practice. That emergent alternative physical practices often replicate such ‘dominant schemes of perception’ and ‘patriarchal dividends’ over time (despite the intent to counter such systems and values) shows the inherent difficulties in trying to realise transformative change through sport from below. Also, the symbolic capital and doxic logics which restrict and govern such attempts at change. These issues also reflect the complex and unresolvable tensions involved in terming 3SF a ‘sport for all’ and how the contested social field prevents singular definitions within the community itself.

Thus far, my analysis has placed 3SF as a quixotic practice firmly within the (semi-regulated) hexagonal fields of sporting play. However, in order to fully understand the diffuse forms of ‘practical’ (and impractical) player ‘consciousness’ related to the game, it is now necessary to reach beyond sporting paradigms (triolectic or otherwise). Beginning with another 3SF ‘World Cup’ context, the following chapter will demonstrate how 3SF is also linked to the enduring legacy of Situationism in contemporary creative activism. Moreover, how experiential ‘haiku’ 3SF interventions have led to distinct forms of engaged parodic political action, absurdist artistic-sporting practice, and what Lefebvre terms, a renewed ‘right to the city’.

3 SIDED FOOTBALL 1934
THE THIRD WORLD CUP
21st July 2018
Parkers Piece, Cambridge



WORKING CLASS HEROES
Trade Union Council
Stand Up To Racism
AntiFa - ƉεϚM委π

KICKOFF: 3:33pm
FREE ENTRY
ALL WELCOME
BRING YOUR TEAM or JOIN ON THE DAY

Figure 25. Political 3SF Flyer Cambridge 2018 (Courtesy of anti-systemic)



Figure 26. 3SF's future 'on the line' 2016 (Courtesy of MJ)

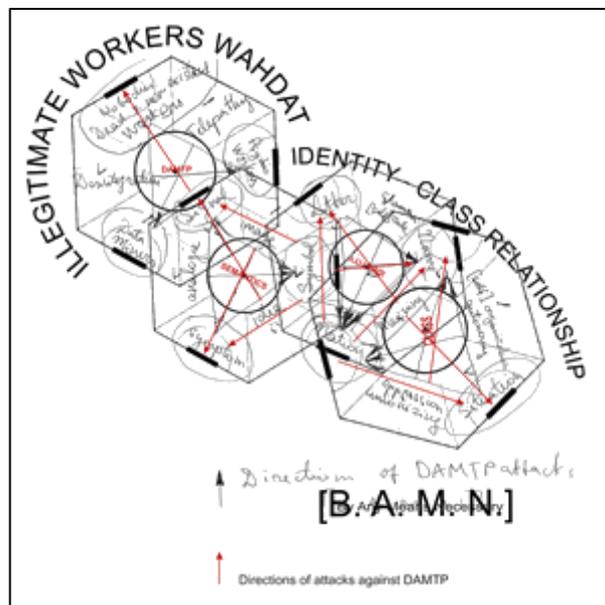


Figure 27. Form is Temporary, Class is Permanent. 3SF in Print 2017. (Courtesy of DAMTP)



Figure 28. 3SF Urban Drift #1. 2017. (Courtesy of L. Blissett)

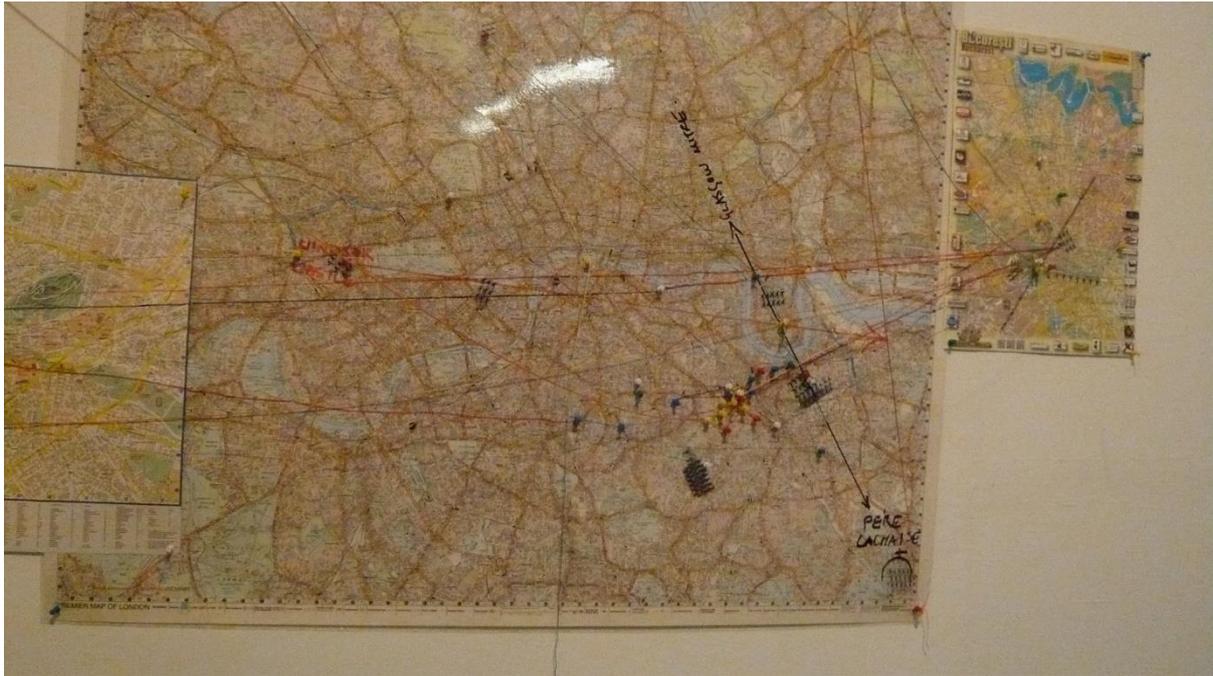


Figure 29. Mapping Urban 3SF Drifts in London. November 2018. (Personal Collection)



Figure 30. Alytus 3SF Experiments in the Woods 2015. (Courtesy of Wahdat)

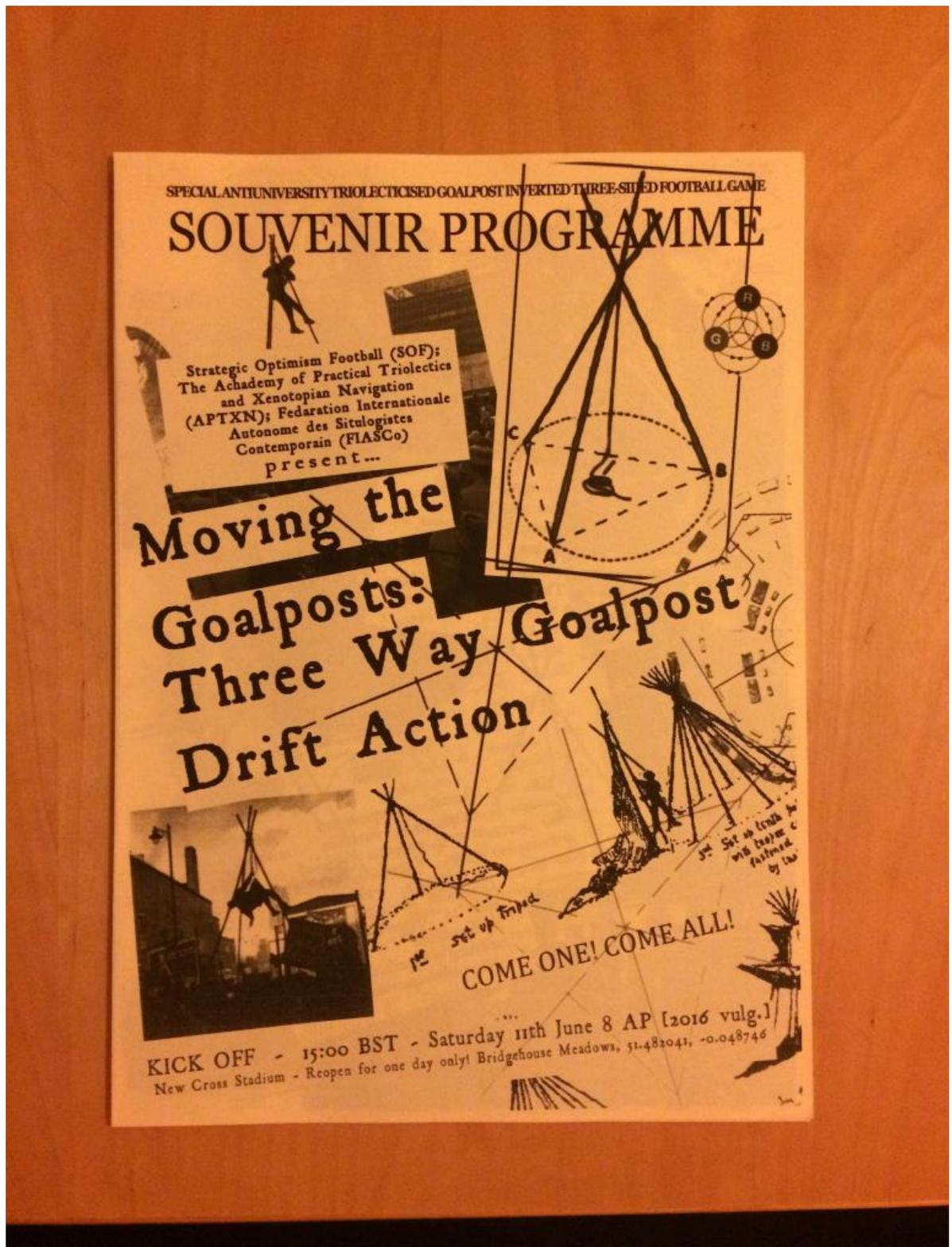


Figure 31. Flyer for Anti University 3SF Workshop 2016. (Courtesy of Mayday Rooms Archive)



Figure 32. Life or Theatre? 3SF as Political Intervention in Alytus 2016. (Courtesy of SOFC)



Figure 33. A Sport of the Absurd? 3SF Parody (Courtesy of Streatham Rovers)



Figure 34. Triolectic Invisible Training 2016. (Courtesy of IL)



Figure 35. Quantum 3SF Match to Reverse the Omphalos of the British Empire 2016. (Courtesy of IL)

Chapter 6. Play and Politics

Known as ‘the city of perspiring dreams’ due to the prestigious intellectual tradition of its university, Cambridge is also upheld as the ‘birthplace’ of modern football. Here, in the mid-19th century, on a small patch of ‘hallowed turf’ called Parkers Piece, a group of elite educated men (with an aversion to ‘shin kicking’ and ‘ball handling’) established a standardised ‘Cambridge’ code for all nascent football clubs to follow. In nailing their principles to the post (or in this case the surrounding trees), members of Cambridge University Football Club were seeking to avoid the endless disputes and competing interpretations of a sporting practice that was yet to adopt universal rules or principles of play. Subsequently adopted by the FA in 1863 with minor additions, the formalised sport of ‘association football’ was born.

At the southern tip of present-day Parkers Piece, there is an imposing three-pillared statue dedicated to the 1848 codification. Commissioned by Cambridge City Council to celebrate 170 years of sporting enclosure, and designed by artists Alan Ward and Neville Gabie, this triumvirate testament to the beautiful game was unveiled in May 2018 to a muted local reception. However, within just two months of its installation it had realised an important civic role in the community; providing one of the three goals necessary for artists and activists seeking a return to the political ‘roots’ of 3SF. In the very same space that fervent exponents of late-Victorian ‘muscular Christianity’ codified and laid claim to a millennia-old folk practice, an ‘alternative’ 3SF World Cup final was played in protest against a fascist political rally moving through the city that day.

It is perhaps fitting that this fantastical 3SF tournament was held adjacent to a footpath that runs through Parkers Piece known to locals as ‘Reality Checkpoint’ (Carolin 2013, Elliott & Atkinson 2012). On this suitably liminal path, between mirth, Marx and mud, I commenced

my fieldwork interviews in November 2018; beginning with a practical education into the importance of creative activism for players of the more experimental forms of 3SF.

As I stepped off the train I phoned Asim to find out where he was. We had nominally arranged a 'sit down' interview at his home but he had since changed the location a number of times. When the call finally connected, I could barely hear him over the raucous background noise.

"I'm on the street for this BDS march. Shit's going down by the university, meet me by Parkers Piece, you can help me with the flyers!"

As became apparent, the carnivalesque atmosphere I could hear down the line was in fact a political protest held by students and local activists demanding Cambridge University join the ongoing cultural boycott of Israel and its associated academic institutions.

After spending the morning distributing Asim's Letterist political pamphlets across the city, we sat down for a coffee to discuss 3SFs recent trajectories. Here, Asim handed me a flyer he had recently designed for a 3SF protest match against the far-right campaigner 'Tommy Robinson'; the kick off was appropriately at 3.33pm. Inspired by the sporting hegemony encountered in Kassel, Asim had decided to reprise 3SF in the context he had used the game to re conceptualise his own creative activist praxis.

It was back in April 2004 that Asim had first used 3SF as a device to rethink political action in a more creative way. In the months prior to the arrest of militant Islamic preacher, Cheick Abu Hamza al-Masri, there were regular White supremacist National Front groups arriving at the Finsbury Park mosque, flanked by the (marginally less racist) Metropolitan Police in North London. As part of the Antifascist counter protests which were accompanying these demonstrations, 3SF acted (for Asim) as an absurdist and despairing critique of the rising

islamophobia in Britain and the complex social dynamics at play in the Finsbury Park community at the time. Through the distribution of invitational flyers to a game of 'political football', Asim reflected on how 3SF repurposed conceptions of sport in a subversive way which forced the public to think.

...I approached it from day one like that. I was framing it as a demo.... So you had the sons of Sharia, the NF and then you had the police obviously.... So I started using it to think about it anyway but in a political and in a triolectical sense...

Far beyond sporting paradigms, Asim considered 3SF as an absurdist political device which disrupted the restrictive binary thinking evident in wider social structures. To 'think three sided' for him meant to conceive and create unorthodox, playful forms of cultural resistance, yet still framed within Marxist theory. Creating political 'World Cup' protests of 3SF had a heightened significance for Asim again during the summer of 2018 in the wake of the recent emergence of the Democratic Football Lads Alliance, who were using 'football' as a signifier to mobilise attendance at right wing rallies in London, Birmingham and Cambridge. As he further explained,

...the FLA (sic) have actively organised around football and I think 3SF can show...like Avant-garde groups do, shit that's going to happen and struggles which will occur on a wider scale. 3SF is a laboratory of experimenting with forms and these are real ways, practical ways, in which this shit can be resisted. Psychic structures need to be resisted, because really that is 3SF. You know like Marx said, 'its commodities'. Capital isn't the relationship of people with objects but people with people and that's what three sided is. Its not about a relationship to the ball its about a relationship to other people. So its a way of finding new ways of disrupting that, and finding new ways to relate to each other...that's its importance!

Framed within a lineage of avant-garde cultural practices which probed at the limits of norms and boundaries, Asim was committed to taking Marx into subversive and public contexts through 3SF, utilising tactics extolled by the Situationist International (namely detournement and psychogeography). Ergo, the formation of competitive sporting clubs was directly opposed to the 'revolutionary' 3SF spirit espoused by Jorn. As he explained in no uncertain terms, removing 3SF from this political context was problematic, if not unsurprising.

...3SF on its own isn't all that radical. That is the truth. Its part of other shit. You know what I mean? Other stuff that's going on...3SF as a way of 'training footballers' is real recuperation, like a classical recuperation of how radical it can really be. So if its being eaten by football...its potentiality is sapped...But its sapped by the super structure because its framed in the 'situation' of football...Where it grew from is the psychogeographical groups and methods which were resisting these frameworks...3SF is a 'practical application', you know that was Jorn's thing, the 'practical application' of triolectics. So it was part of a whole range of methods and techniques that were being experimented with...

Tired of the strictures of received forms of political activism, Asim had actively turned away from 'party politics' to play at new forms of association and creative praxis over the last two decades. During this time he helped form autonomous political groups, namely the 'Psychic Workers Union' and DaMPT who were adopting playful, imaginative and disruptive forms of protest as a way to challenge what he perceived as the overly serious and dogmatic posturing of the Left. The disruptive notion of applied triolectics in 3SF was therefore a further way to challenge over intellectualism and elitism.

...because what we were talking about before in terms of European Marxism, their dialectics is totally academic, its at a standstill. Triolectics is a way of disrupting that. The European Left, they resist innovation...they've become like a religious cult with

Marx as a prophet and dialectics as the holy book...you cannot innovate from it. If you innovate, you are crazy!

Such 'innovation' was central to Asim's creative praxis which he described to me as an attempt to 'decolonise the Avant garde'. This meant dismantling the Western European canon in search of new political theory and aesthetic traditions. In drawing unlikely links between 3SF, Haroufi Sufi practice, Situationism and translations of obscure Soviet mystics from the 1950s, the game formed a practical resistance against (what he perceived) as the false distinctions between art, sport and politics. Within this context, 3SF also acted as a re-assessment of the legacy of Situationism in the present day. As he explained further,

...its about moving away from that Debord idea of Situationism. Jorn was completely against this Western European centrism and into his Scandinavian culture and mysticism as well...and that doesn't really sit that well within the White Science, West European, French Intellectual position does it?...

Introduction

As the previous chapter detailed, 3SF is an activity that exists in a liminal space and an ontological uncertainty. It is a vessel into which practitioners pour their hopes, dreams and political imaginations; however antithetical, oblique or obscured they are to the other parties with whom they share the field of play. However, in order to fully understand the disparate ways in which 3SF gives meaning to those who play the game, it is vital to consider the enduring anarchic forms and experimental iterations of the game. Analysed in these contexts, 3SF represents the opportunity to play at new forms of political association, creative practice and absurdist critique. These outlier forms of 3SF (both real and imagined) offer a form of 'creative activism' and an 'intervention' implicitly linked to the cultural context that the game was first conceived and realised.

For a small but visible group of the playing community, 3SF is therefore situated within a much larger political project aimed at dismantling received paradigms and social practices through the tactics of the SI. Thus the game becomes a site to consider the enduring legacy of SI in contemporary culture and the difficulties in assessing such forms of 'practical consciousness' for achieving lasting political change.

From 3SF's material realisation in the early 1990s through to the recent formation of the 'Invisible League', players continue to be drawn to 3SF from activist and artistic backgrounds seeking to use Situationist tactics as part of their creative practice. Through experimental iterations of the game, (which have included rotating bicycle goals, 9 simultaneous games on the same pitch and all players being tied together by a single length of chord), participants find complex meanings in play which are associated with psychogeography, and *detournement*. Therefore, this chapter focusses on the narratives of 10 participants within my research sample who explicitly linked the game to Situationism and playful politics. This sample includes players involved in the first games of 3SF in Glasgow and London through to recent games of 'psychogeographic river football' and 3SF 'haiku' urban interventions across the UK and Europe.

Whilst this 'creative' approach towards the game may not be representative of the broader playing community, (or the dominant narratives which emerged about 3SF during my interviews), the voices which constitute the following analysis chapter form an important and influential part of the games practice. They also give an insight into the value that participants take from the practical (and impractical) application of Situationist theory in politics. Further, how humour becomes a key device in 3SF's distinct form.

A broad overview of the themes which are covered in this chapter are indicated through Asim's story detailed above. Although his stood out (alongside two of 3SF's early practitioners) in relating 3SF to a specific political project to promote Jorn and creative

Marxist praxis explicitly. These responses aligned with Collier's top down study into the game which places 3SF as a central component to Jorn's revival and recovery in UK activism. However, the majority of players I interviewed in these outlier contexts talked more broadly about 'Situationist' tactics and the 'Left', without specific reference to Jorn. Thus, the following analysis will outline the enduring importance of 3SF and its associated creative activities within a paradigm of what Tom Vague describes as 'pop-Situationism' (2000).

Chapter 6 begins with participants reflections on realising Situationist ideas in practice through 3SF. Next, it considers how play offered a liminal and transformative space for players to re think the possibilities of left-wing activism and solidarity. The analysis then shows how 3SF offers a renewed 'right to the city' for those involved. Moreover, how within contemporary art contexts, 3SF offers a disruptive challenge to the 'democratic' narratives and banal universalisms associated with 'Art'. The final sections of the chapter chart the ways in which 3SF continues to sit between absurd parody, 'Mutant Situationism' and political intervention. Thus, I show how the game is an ambivalent lived space to explore alternative social, political and sporting relations, characterised by what Eichberg (2010) has termed 'an underground of laughter'. In this sense, more broadly my analysis further situates 3SF as a site of playful agency and ambiguity, where players feel able to refuse 'rational logic' and pull away from instrumentality and outcome orientation.

From Page to Pitch. 3SF as Realising the 'Situation'

A key theme that emerged from my interviews with the more experimental 3SF players was the sense of excitement and political renewal found in realising Situationism within literary forms and material practices in contemporary culture. Indicative of such responses, a key figure responsible for the 'practical application' of Asger Jorn's triolectics in the pages of the LPA explained how 3SF for him was a refusal to play by the rules of received political discourse. Fabian had first come across Jorn's writing whilst working in an anarchist bookshop. He described how early games had been collectively developed in the wake of a

number of demoralising political defeats and was reflective of a wider sense of political inertia on the Left at the time. In particular, he related the inspiration for the first parodic political 3SF match report he wrote to the election of Derek Beacon, a British National Party councillor, in his home ward of Millwall in 1993.

...I realised that very kind of linear, logically defined approach to politics didn't work. ...so again it was like three sided football. I mean how do you deal with all these people around you who vote for Nazis? By bringing up Enochian magic and sport! It was a psychological coping mechanism. It was a way to cope with the craziness...

(Fabian)

In relating how obscure literary forms of political critique found wider meaning as a social practice, Fabien further detailed the importance of Situationist ideas to enact politics outside of the normative structures of activism. As with the other activities associated with the LPA at the time, the impetus behind the early matches of 3SF was to therefore bring people together and re-create these imagined political experiences or 'situations' in real life.¹⁹

As Lefebvre suggests (in relation to the transformation of everyday life) "speech freed from its servitude plays a necessary part, but it is not enough" (1974: 124). It was therefore imperative for early practitioners to reach beyond words either spoken or written about 3SF and establish what it felt like to create the 'sporting situation' of 3SF. Whether that was through psychogeographic drifts in Blackheath, games of 3SF in East London, 'gabba rave performance lectures' at the 121 Anarchist Social Centre in Brixton (hosted by Praxis Records), a key aspect of these neo-situationist activities was 'doing not thinking'. Having other people play and appropriate 3SF as both a literary device and political activity by the

¹⁹ Whilst the increasing interest in Situationism in the early 1990s has been framed as a predominantly artistic and literary movement linked to a retrospective at the ICA in 1989 (see Coverly, 2018; Bonnett 2009; Home, 1997) many autonomous political groups throughout the 1980s and 1990s continued to use their ideas albeit within an underground DIY samizdat tradition akin to the LPA.

likes of the AAA, WNLA and the Luther Blissett Project gave Fabian a sense of renewed optimism about achieving political change in contemporary culture. As he explained further,

(Through 3SF and related activities)...I started finding the revolution again. I started to find a new relation to this way of thinking — not trapped in ‘politics’ or other discourses which are predetermined. When I started working on this material back in 1991, people would look at me and say I was crazy. “Why are you going back to ‘psychogeography’? It’s all old stuff that no-one worries about any more”...

(Fabian)

Reflecting on his experiences playing the first documented 3SF match held in Glasgow in 1993, Mark D also saw the subversive potential of 3SF in its ability to resist structures of power and dominant political discourses in physical space. Despite the games origins as a thought experiment, he felt it was important to experience what the Situationist’s were writing about to see if their theorizing on the revolutionary nature of play held true. This provided the impetus for the formation of the WNLA 3SF games and our recent Invisible game together in the confluence of two South London Rivers.

...Psychogeography is about physical presence in the world and how you react to things and there is that aspect to three sided as well. The fact that its in real time and physical. ...Imagine that game we were playing the other day, imagine that is what we were doing all the time!...You are just experimenting and making up these alternative ways of playing to live...it becomes a self-organising principle of exploration - through doing it rather than writing about it, or contemplating it....I mean you saw what happened when we went into the pub afterwards, we were all trying to figure out if ‘we could do this’ or ‘why don’t we do that?’ ...So its a constant process of things leading on to the next.

(Mark D)

As Massey contends, “thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated” (2005: 52). Through the remapping of sporting and political terrains in 3SF key questions were being formulated by players as to how play can be utilised in practical ways to challenge and disrupt power. Such ‘spatial formulations’ were also brought up by Florina who framed 3SF within a wider set of neo-situationist projects she had been a part of in recent years. For her, 3SF was an activity that countered an elitist approach to politics and a site of collective collaboration away from staid debates on the efficacy of ‘political theory’.

3SF and the games around it, it made politics more fun. Politics can be really fun if you ... it doesn't have to be serious and I think the more serious you make it out to be the worse it is for our cause to be honest....People on the Left have this sin of over explaining stuff and going into all this theory and ideology and trying to explain ...it keeps it in a very academic environment so its not good that its kept there. So we need to bring it to the people!...and I think that three sided football, and the people and the things around it has this kind of potential to be a quite democratic thing....

(Florina)

Here 3SF proved meaningful to Florina as an accessible, democratic and practical demonstration of political theory. It also had a role as an outreach tool for those seeking to achieve wider social change. In its collective realisation (for her) the game had the ability to move revolutionary Left politics from abstracted, conceived spaces and towards a lived social practice, one experienced through the body and in space.

Despite being one of the key protagonists in recent literary fictions about 3SF, Asim also felt (3SF as a practice) was indicative of a wider need to disrupt public space in recent times (which he described alongside Occupy movements and the Arab Spring). He felt the act of

challenging received notions of thinking and doing politics in space was a vital process towards achieving change through 'psychogeographic sport'.

You know psychogeography is all about how ideas are happening in the concrete space, and for me 3SF is a part of that...That is what 3SF is all about, disrupting these psychic spaces...its the shape of power...how are you going to change that? Because the power is entrenched. 3SF has a revolutionary shape...they don't know what to do with it....

(Asim)

As the above player responses demonstrate, the recovery of a sense of political possibility through playing 3SF was a key part its allure for some players. The game can therefore be understood as a creative spatial strategy for players to test out new forms of politics and solidarity. It was also a 'detourned' cultural form through which to subvert football as a direct and accessible demonstration of political theory. Through the strategic psychogeographic mapping of leftist politics on to a received sporting practice 3SF also acted as both a coping mechanism and site of playful liberation and agency.

As Slabina argues in her work on 'Grounded Playfulness', the playground can be a 'semi bound' and 'socially legitimate space' to "bring abstractions onto the flesh of the world as well as to explore the texture wherein human experiences occur" (2014: 122). In this regard, the sense of 'grounded playfulness' within 3SF situations was central to the games role as a refusal to speak to power in coherent or received political syntax for players. Equally, the creation of a psychogeographic 'playground' in the city through games of 3SF enabled those involved to collectively realise DIY alternative structures and activist practices in the face of a perceived lack of viable political alternatives (see Graeber, 2002; Springer, 2014).

3SF Play as Transformational

Lefebvre writes in *The Production of Space* (1991: 166–167), that “any revolutionary project today, whether utopian or realistic, must, if it is to avoid hopeless banality, make the re appropriation of the body, in association with the re appropriation of space, into a non-negotiable part of its agenda.” Therefore, given 3SF players fervent belief in the potential for psychogeography (and its related activities) to challenge real world conditions of capitalist alienation and to ‘rediscover revolution’, it was important in my interviews to understand how players appropriated the game in space and experienced it through their bodies. Also, how those involved thought the game (and the SI in general) could relate political ideas to a wider public.

This line of inquiry prompted many players to consider the importance of play in offering an embodied agenda to rethink and re appropriate the world around them (see also Chapter 7). However, as Agamben suggests, “the act of play is profane and opens up new possibilities for politics” (1994: 84). With this in mind the following section details such possibilities for those involved in such experiential activist activities. Within my variegated study of 3SF players ‘practical consciousness’ these outlier activist contexts are key in understanding the plurality of interpretations which continue to shape and define the game.

The anarchic and improvised nature of 3SF (in practice) reminded Asim of protests he had been involved in. In this material context, he considered 3SF as a potential practical tool to break people out of their entrenched factions and to develop skills in organising autonomously towards a common goal.

...My first game was 9 simultaneous games of three sided football...9 games at once! It was brilliant! It was like being in a riot or something you know...different groups that are kind of together and not. It reminded me of that. You know these kind of political factions...when you’re at a demo and things get confrontational, there is always these crews of different political groups and its always interesting to see how

they interact, especially when they are under pressure from the pigs and from other
...from fascists or whatever...its always a very dynamic space...

...(3SF is similar)...to the way that crowd then gets organised and organises itself...it
is that kind of self-organising which is key!

(Asim)

Indicative of 7 similar responses, rather than simply playing the game, Asim emphasised how 3SF was able to replicate or simulate the self-organising 'structures of feeling' found at political protests. 3SF therefore had a practical application in teaching people how to react in highly charged and dynamic spaces, such as those at large scale political protests and against the police.

For Florina, her experiences of playing 3SF were also demonstrative of 'self-organising principles' which could be fostered and further developed using the game. She had first played the game in 2016 as part of the Quantum Flux Equinox Football Festival (which also included a game of psychogeographic poker and 'n sided chess'). Not having a grounding in Situationist theory or the work of Asger Jorn was not an impediment to understanding the principles that 3SF demonstrated as an embodied practice. The dynamics of playing 'multi focal' forms of 3SF alongside other associated Situationist 'games' showed Florina a form of practical bottom up politics, where theory would give way to playful, embodied and lived experiences. As she explained further,

I don't think you fully get it until you play it. Which I discovered myself...

Me: What did you 'get' from those first 3SF games?

...like on the spot...community, solidarity and just human interaction that you don't really get through conventional human interaction, at work or whatever. Not even with your friends...there is always a layer of society put upon you and I think play kind of sometimes manages to put that aside. Play brings something different to the surface, something that you haven't thought about. Its like a creative problem solving exercise and three sided football is kind of a tool for that...it kind of makes you think differently.

Florina further stated in our interview that due to the fluid and improvised form of many experiential 3SF games, she felt the game could help test the boundaries of potential forms of solidarity engendered within the heightened state of play. In this context, 3SF play became a testing ground (for her and others) to challenge assumptions about the relationship between 'art' and 'life' and non-instrumental collective political action.

It feels like endless possibilities...and it is play that reaches the boundaries of reality, like, brushes them up a bit...It was very interesting how creating this space of total...we all let go of anything that is conventional and real and got into this space of imagination...The goal posts were running away and the trees were playing, everybody played! People who were involved in this community, (whatever it is), some Italians...from Bologna - they were saying "we are not playing football! This is bullshit!", but they started playing and it was actually super fun!

(Florina)

Here, the heightened embodied feelings involved in triolectic experiential games of 3SF were a way to 'let go' and enter into a space of political imagination and improvisation. In what Huizinga would describe as "stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own" (1954: 27), the political possibilities for 3SF were endless. As the goal posts took on a life of their own and began to move around the forests of southern Lithuania (the central geographic point of Europe), experimental artists, creative

activists and cultural 'psychic' workers 'unionised' in collaborative liminal play through games of 3SF.

As Castelfranchi reminds us 'play is a vital tool for social action' (2000: 138). In this sense, through 3SF, players in these contexts were freed from the constraints of everyday life to nurture a sense of togetherness and solidarity. They also found a freedom to experiment with their relationship to the world and politics. The emotional and physical experiences of play were frequently referenced by those involved in these experimental collective games during our interviews. Further indicative of these responses, Fabien reflected on how the Situationist games he had been involved in since the early 1990s had provided a unique space to explore alternative political realities, and to transform the political 'self'.

...for all of it, something about play gets you out of yourself. You start to...you are no longer your everyday self, you become...New things open up and I think that's what it did for people...

(Fabien)

Similarly, Alex B found the 'collective play' of 3SF provided new forms of political agency. Here, 3SF as liminal paidic play became a "key site of rehearsal where alternative ontologies could be tested and tried" (Bergere, 2017: 150).

Play just as an outlet is I think..its...I don't know..its very underestimated in sort of realising ideas, or being creative...its something that's sort of dismissed and for children...it doesn't have so much of a place in adult life...through 3SF I've been more aware of like how I interact with the world, and how much more playful it can be.

(Alex B)

For Lefebvre “the segmentation of social life by capitalism highlights the threat which play poses, as evidence of a non-instrumental – non-commodifiable basis for urban relations. It also reveals the potential of play to respond dialectically to instrumentality” (1991: 373). In this regard, there is a revealing freedom found in players reflections on the act of playing 3SF. This finding suggests the enduring importance of the game as a non-instrumental experiential paidic practice. Within these contexts players were able to explore transformative social and political associations. Also, they were able to express disdain at the state of contemporary politics through such ‘negative dialectical’ embodied acts (see Collier, 2018: 233).

Understood in this way, play (and its perceived triviality and non-instrumental character) in 3SF becomes an important tactic for some players in the political struggle over space and its production. Here, the ‘playing body’ becomes an embodied political tool (Stevens, 2004). With this in body and mind, I contend that 3SF can further be understood as a site of ‘practical consciousness’ outside of the soccerscape which offers a tangible challenge for players to resist the logics of ‘productive value’ in capitalist culture and urban space.

3SF as Urban Intervention

3SF has developed as a contradictory amalgamation of sport, performance art and political praxis. As such, it should be understood as at once a form of ‘creative activism’ and “an ambiguously nuanced heuristic, by which the marginal may take their grievances to the physical and symbolic centres...where alternative logics and spectacles are performed” (St. John, 2008: 182). In this regard, away from the alternative soccerscape, a number of participants related how ‘3SF’ (in the loosest definition of the term) had made them approach and interact in city spaces in new ways. This points to how the game (beyond sporting paradigms) offers distinct forms of practical spatial critique and embodied consciousness.

3SF was a central part of Matthew's political re-awakening. Through 'psychogeographic football drifts' organised by SOFC across South London he had been able to re-engage with politics after considerable disillusionment with 'the system'. Through the act of *detournement* he found a subversive way to question everyday life.

(3SF)...its just so unique in its form...something that is so part of everyday culture and so known to the world and just to spin it on its head a little bit and try and present it in a very different way...or actively do it in a different way was really exciting...I think from that initial experience there has been a lot of games that try and sort of subvert our everyday way of living in quite an interesting way

(Matthew)

3SF in its myriad of guises also provided Alex B with a platform to re imagine London. As he sought ways to break out of the restrictions he felt were imposed on the use of city space, 'urban football drifts' offered a transformative liberatory practice.

...I think through interacting with the city in a slightly different way, if you have this sort of goal of 'playing it', it sort of rejects the ways in which you only have a direct route...Often through our games of three sided football, I was really experimenting with using the city in another way

(Alex B)

Disrupting urban spaces through 'guerrilla games' of 3SF was also a key factor in how Tah Eteh was drawn to the game. They used such urban intervention games to challenge and unsettle the unstable notions of public and private space. Recounting an Invisible game held around the environs of Liverpool Street Station, 3SF was a defiant refusal of the controlled uses of space in the financial centre of the city of London.

Just to think of like...everywhere that you go as a potential football pitch is really fun...we mentioned before, we were talking about space being at a premium in London, there is a lot of privatised space as well...well, I think that 3SF is playful enough that it can disrupt that. It can momentarily take back these spaces so...some games where we've played have been like 10 seconds long, 30 seconds longwe've dubbed them the 3SF Haikus! So like one pass to another player, maybe a tackle , maybe a shot on goal, but thats it!...You don't know when it will be broken up....

(Tah Eteh)

To imagine each journey on to the city streets as a potential 3SF Haiku intervention was an inherently creative political act for these players, even if it wasn't received as such by those witnessing the events. Here in analogous ways to the Midnight Cricketers detailed in Gilchrist and Ravenscroft's (2013) work, 3SF players were playfully disrupting (albeit temporarily) the segmentation of social life, sport and politics. In turn, players were also intervening and 'dwelling' irrationally in the 'rationalised' and alienated urban landscape in pursuit of a 'renewed right to urban life'. If the 'inhabitation' of space is central to spatial production, then such rebellious playful acts in 3SF refused the functional separation of urban space to create politicised spaces of 'encounter' and 'interaction' (Gottdiener, 1993: 109).

For Stevens, creative political activities such as these reflect "how space can be utilised to escape from serious meanings and uses, to critique the normal social order" (2007: 122). In this context, we can understand '3SF interventions' as play in the 'paidic' sense, as an activity which refuses to accept limits, as an escape from routine and structure (sporting or otherwise), and as a lived critique of instrumentality and 'rational action' (Caillois, 1961).

As Alex B further detailed, the ability to transform, disarm and dismantle structures of power albeit temporarily through such playful interventions became a key part of their participation in the game. For them, 3SF became a way of doing politics 'in the moment'

free from instrumentality or intention. Here, 3SF served a dual purpose in disrupting space, creating new political 'situations' and destabilising social relations between player, ball, and authority.

...when you're up against it, its very difficult to understand it. It puts it outside of the social norms so how do you deal with that as an authority? How do you normally shut down a protest?...but you are not sure how it will unfold because it is a game, or its using play in order to manipulate the way that you think about that 'situation' ...and that is very political.

(Alex B)

3SF as Art Intervention

Combatting the listless inertia of an utterly commodified art world and an ever more ossified and ineffectual political system. It was never a performance...It was a political act, like a strike, or a march, or a brick through a window. It was politics first!

The University of Strategic Optimism (2012:72)

The history of Strategic Optimism Football Club (SOFC), founder members of the 3SF Deptford League and ever present at World Cups and Invisible League fixtures, reflects both a despair at the coalition Government of 2010 in the UK, and also how 3SF has formed a distinct form of creative activist protest against the 'bourgeois institutions' of art and politics in recent times. SOFC team captain Chris, had become politicised whilst a Masters student at Goldsmiths University. Here, he helped found the UfSO in the wake of the student protests against tuition fees.

Over the next four years the autonomous University staged a number of playful performative interventions aimed at disrupting public spaces and gained considerable press coverage in the process. These actions included public 'Flash' lectures and 'Mass Debates' held within Banks about 'Higher Education, Neo-Liberalism and the State', a DIY lecture Booth taken to protests entitled 'Unkettling Education: A Riotous Teach-In'; and also writing collective treaties on the education-industrial-complex under various collective pseudonyms. As part of his own creative practice Chris C subsequently formed SOFC in 2013 as an 'anti-football' football club inspired by the Luther Blissett Project.

In our interview he described how he saw 3SF as a parodic device to push beyond separate definitions of art and politics using football. It was also one which points to another site of practical consciousness for 3SF players.

...Duchamp abandoned art to take up chess, well, we abandoned politics in order to take up three-sided football!...I mean it was quite naive looking back but we needed to flip the whole narrative, so that it was neither art nor politics and trying to think of new ways of perceiving what this was all about...

Despite Chris C's apparent intentions for SOFC to 'withdraw' from politics, the liminal space that 3SF provided to creatively re imagine forms of political protest made this an impossible task. The clubs first official game was held on an International day of action held in solidarity against the devastating effects of cyanide in the goldmines of the Rosia Montana region of Transylvania. As he explained,

So we ended up playing against this Canadian Multi-national. That was just with painted banners and we played at Fordham...Half our team was Romanian at that point...so there were big protests happening all over. So it was part of the solidarity for that...so even the first game was political!

(Chris C)

Chris' responses show how 3SF has long been utilised as a device through which to stage spectacular public artistic performances. This creative sporting approach to protest can also be found in the mass intervention 3SF games of 2016 'flash mob football' at the TATE Modern, the 2012 'triolympics' at Deptford X gallery and more recently, at Documenta 14 in 2017. Here (as also detailed in Chapter 5), 3SF became a way to disrupt art festivals and protest at the games recuperation in to 'curatorial capitalism'.

Across the weekend of the ill-fated 2017 World Cup, other interventionist creative 'protest' games of 3SF were played in and around sculptures, outside installations, across streets, in a disused munitions factory and through public parks. Repeated attempts were made by 3SF activists to establish a game in the centre of town where the most prestigious art installations were located. However, the private security firm hired to police the event repeatedly shut these games down and confiscated the paint soaked footballs which were bouncing around the public art works.

Despite the official dictum from Adam Szymczyk, (the artistic director), that "Documenta 14 is not owned by anyone in particular. It is shared among its visitors and artists, readers and writers, as well as all those whose work make it happen" (ArtNews, 2018) the sporting interventions of 3SF players were not tolerated. Recalling one brief game which used Hans Haacke's 'Wir (alle) sind das Volk' artwork as one of the goals, Lucasz saw 3SF art interventions as a challenge to the 'bourgeois' conceit that Documenta 14 was anything other than a commercial enterprise, or worse, one which wilfully removed the politics from art. As the former SOFC player explained further in our interview,

...it was an act against Documenta. To prove their bullshit. All that shit they set up like, 'this is democracy', 'Art is democratic', when it isn't. Its just another Universalism or its just an abstraction. Its not a real democracy! Real democracy would be people playing football in the art and then the conflicts that would arise,

that is politics...fake consensus, that is not politics! 'Politics' is when you go into that place and start playing football....

(Lucasz)

Here we can further underpin the diverse ways in which 3SF gives opportunities for autonomous artists and creative activists to stage performative and absurd protests. Utilising the ambivalent, absurd and playful nature of the game as a political weapon, (in these contexts) 3SF becomes a temporary re-appropriation and occupation of artistic spaces. Also, it is an act which refuses to erase the subversive and radical political intent of much of the material output of the 20th century avant-garde (which ironically is now housed and decontextualized within banal and sterile modern art gallery spaces).

3SF as Serious Playfulness?

During my interviews with the (self-defined) 'cultural workers' or 'players' who have constituted this analysis chapter, there were repeated attempts made (9 of the 10 participants) to stress that their 3SF activities were not led by any sense of outcome or strategy beyond the complete destruction of capitalism. This leads us towards an analytic quandary surrounding 3SF as to what to take 'seriously' in experimental iterations and what to take as part of the performative nature of the game. In other words, where does the performance end? Presumably not during an interview with an earnest academic researcher who is potentially basing their entire project on such responses. In this regard, was the wilful unintelligibility and deliberate absurdism which characterises some of the above responses in fact part of the radical intent for some players of the game? Is 3SF therefore representative not of transformative 'practical consciousness' for players but an elaborate joke?

As Bonnett states, “the work of the Situationists is drawn on, cited, and garbled, in numerous spheres; it has permeated the atmosphere of contemporary cultural experimentation” (1999: 27). Placed within this context should the game of 3SF instead be considered a ‘leaden’ and ‘ritualistic’ pastiche, and a form of creative practice “shorn of its libertarian communist intent, integrated into a postmodern sensibility that privileges surface and irony” (Ibid: 28). With this critique of ‘mutant situationism’ in mind, the final section of this analysis now turns to the use of absurd humour in 3SF and the underground politics of laughter in this alternative sport.

Laughing at Politics: 3SF as a Sport of the Absurd

This chapter has thus far shown the ways in which 3SF offers players a device through which to re-conceptualise sport, to re-appropriate political discourse, and to utilise Situationist ideas as material praxis. Further, it has showed 3SF as a tool for players to explore collective play as a distinct form of political solidarity, and as an urban and artistic intervention. However, a crucial aspect of playing the game (which spanned responses across the 3SF community) was the importance of absurdist humour, joking and laughter to the unique quality (and triolectic spirit) of the game. In this way, the game formed a further site of reflexive resistance and practical consciousness for players.

As Eichberg contends, “the games of popular culture cannot be understood if one does not listen to the noise of enjoyment and pleasure, the ironical calls, the obscene remarks, the laughter...all this intonation is not just a side-effect of the game, it is central to the social-bodily process” (Eichberg, 2010: 290). Therefore, it was necessary for me to consider the social-bodily processes at play in the embodied humour of 3SF in my research.

Within the narratives which have developed about the game by players in print and through the direct action on the field, knowing humour, parody, and laughter, frequently accompany grandiose statements about toppling capitalism through games of 3SF. Depending on the

players imaginations, 3SF matches have also been held to ‘Smash Serious Culture’, on Karl Marx’s grave to revive the ailing Left, and to reverse the omphalos of the British Empire. Other games have involved being chased by security guards and submerging playing bodies in the icy confluence of Rivers in winter. Some matches have used giant inflatable balls and rotating bicycle goals, whilst others have had teams that swapped strips at the beginning of each third to obscure any attempt to differentiate between the teams and ‘revolutionise the opposition’. In short, 3SF is a sport of the absurd. As such, the game is at once a ‘serious joke’, and a chance to play with the seriousness in which it has been recently played and framed as a serious sporting practice in popular contexts. In this sense, this joking should be taken seriously as demonstrative of how activists utilise play and parodic subversion as a key part of their creative praxis.²⁰

The ambiguity and humour found in such creative acts “calls for a revision of the grammar of activism, its culture and its organization” (Harrebye, 2015: 136). With this in mind, the intentional lack of instrumentality or wilful mis-explanation which accompanies many neo Situationist activities (of which 3SF is definitely not immune) is problematic when attempting to assess or analyse the ‘productive capacity’ or rationality of social actors intentions in playing these games. However, these evasive tactics also confront how a lack of instrumentality becomes a key part of the protest within 3SF itself. Such sporting absurdism offers another form of refusal to be bound within rationalised and ‘productive’ structures of capitalist or scientific logics.

Understood in this way, the mythmaking and mirth giving responses of the excessive players of 3SF become “a resource of political action ... [which] destabilizes the kinds of certainties that lead to “political illness”, especially as manifested in forms of the humourless state” (Bruner, 2005: 151). As such, 3SF should therefore be analysed (in part) as a humorous and ironic refusal to play by the received rules of sport, art or politics, and a creative practice

²⁰ That 3SF was not intended to demonstrate triolectics but was instead a spoof and a public entry for Jorn into the ‘Collège de ‘Pataphysique’ (so a number of interpretations go) means that since its inception, the game has skirted the line between farce, fact and football (see Hugill, 2012)

through which social actors are able to salve the maladies of an immovable, entrenched and detached political system.

As Rojeck reminds us in his development of the term 'creative activism', "play actions offer a critique of conventional understandings of purpose and need, calling for a different way of thinking about matters" (1995: 12). In this sense, the excessive play of 3SF highlighted throughout this chapter, causes us to reconsider the political value of humour, myth, 'nonsology' and absurdism as a political necessity in the face of a perceived lack of viable alternatives (sporting, political or artistic) in 'neo liberal times'. This is a consideration missing from existing studies into other instances of *detoured* absurdist sporting practices of the Space Hijackers and CON, identified in my literature review.

As the surrealist writer and activist Penelope Rosemont details, "humour is a conscious attitude through which we can assert ourselves over the confines of our environment and reality to, in effect, topple the whole structure and re assemble it as we wish" (2019: 52). The absurdity of many of the 'invisible' games I have been involved in demonstrated to me the power of humour as an outlet and a form of release which pushes the arbitrary boundaries of what can be considered sporting behaviour, performance art and political activism. Understood in these terms, the game can be seen as a form of practical 're- assemblage' which points to the confined nature of orthodox sporting, political and artistic practices.

In the wider social field, 17 interviewees also recounted the freedom that playing 3SF gave a space to laugh and joke about politics. In this regard, Juliet described how 3SF resonated with her own work as a writer and broadcaster. This was a deliberately ambiguous cultural approach to politics which sought to mask where the joke ended and seriousness began.

Its a completely different form of self-expression and being in the world, I do really enjoy it..., I also write manifestos which are simultaneously serious and not serious

and its hard to know whether I am joking or not...I don't always know!...I mean obviously this whole 3SF thing its funny, and humour is really important to me, and particularly the Luther Blissett take on it....People take it seriously... its not like the whole thing is a stupid joke, but I think everyone involved has an awareness that the political concept is kind of amusing. You know, in a good way!

(Juilet)

To think through and play with absurd and contradictory cultural forms gave 3SF players an environment to remake their relationship to the world and each other through embodied play. Echoing the often unstable and ambivalent relationships that the absurdist political tactics of neo-situationists have had with the institutions of 'serious culture' in recent years, part of the appeal of playing 3SF for Robin was that the game was not political in a conventional sense. As they explained,

It isn't like it's specifically a political protest, it's a joke about the idea of a political protest! All of us think about politics with various degrees of seriousness but with this, this is useful. With three sided its like we all know what this kind of politics means...in a playful and childish way, and you don't get that in real life. Its so nice to have that...like anything is possible within that space, within those parameters!

(Robin)

Luke, a devoted 3SFer who has played matches in Middlesboro, Reykjavik and Edinburgh, also argued that the emergence of the game in the UK was indicative of a disillusionment and rejection of serious politics. 3SF on the one hand was a collective escape and on the other an absurd way of laughing at mainstream political discourse.

...politics needs to be joked about otherwise its just embarrassing!...(3SF) is a reaction to politics right now...people just need something that is not horrific in their

lives, like you are just bombarded that everything is just so serious. Like every tweet is the end of the world...You know, Donald Trump has just said some gormless shite...everything becomes so 'Important' and that feeling is powerful. So its nice to do something that isn't important, it doesn't mean anything!

(Luke)

Despite responses from a number of other 3SF players that their activities felt liberated from the pressures of meaning and serious intent, as shown above it is this laissez-faire attitude to play and its relationship to politics which can reveal much about the importance of humour and play as a liminal site of political agency (and a social-bodily process) through which to work through everyday concerns and realise or negotiate potential solutions.

Seminal play scholar, Huizinga defines play as the plurality of approaches in which it is possible to test and transgress the limits of social existence. He states that, "in play there is something which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action...play always means something" (1955: 19). In this regard, I contend that 3SF in its myriad of forms always has meaning and intent regardless of the player responses. This aligns with Steven's work which argues that the emergence of new forms of playful or creative politics which utilise absurdist and humorous tactics are a critical response to specific socio spatial circumstances related to disillusionment and political crisis. Here we can understand the liminal zone provided by activities like 3SF as cultural spaces where participants "step beyond instrumentality, compulsion, convention, safety and predictability to pursue new and uncertain prospects" (2007: 196).

Conclusion

For Lefebvre, play offers a political 'counter space' or 'gaze' "for users in the search for a way forward." It also offers a state which, "breaks down divisions between social and mental, sensory and intellectual, and the everyday and the out of ordinary" (1991: 383).

With this transformational playful (and political) proposition at hand, this chapter has detailed how a select group of 3SF players framed the game as a unique form of political solidarity, as a playful challenge to the strictures of abstract political theory and to received forms of activism. Moreover, in these unbound 'paidic' contexts 3SF became a practice which deconstructed the false separations between art, politics and everyday life for its players. 3SF interventions also offered players a chance to critique the rationalised and strictly controlled spaces of the neo liberal city and the banal universalisms of contemporary art institutions.

In order to further understand the distinct 'social-bodily processes' involved in the everyday play of 3SF, the chapter lastly highlighted the importance of humour and laughter to the absurd 'politics' of the game for select players. These (im)practical applications of Situationist ideas located within 3SF points to an enduring afterlife of the SI in contemporary culture. However, the absurd and liminal zone that 3SF operates within - between play and sport, between serious activism and performance art parody - obscures whether such player 'transgressions' are seeking a coherent political project or social transformation. Equally, whether such acts offer a site of individual epiphany, transient fulfilment or are merely a form of spectacular ironic 'mutant-Situationism'.

Whilst these questions necessarily remain unresolved in my research, it is hoped that this chapter has given space to consider the games complexity as a diverse social practice. Also, the ways in which humour can be used as a resource to political action and a disposition which can become a site of unlikely practical consciousness and reflection.

In contrast to the experiential interpretations of 3SF detailed throughout this analysis chapter, as a codified contemporary sporting practice, 3SF is imbued with 'productive' and rational meaning. Within these contexts, 3SF has been transformed and instrumentalised as a pedagogical tool and a pre figurative form of community organisation. With these productive appropriations in mind and body, Chapter 7 will now trace how 3SF provides

more tangible forms of DIY activism, social outreach, and civic engagement, for the wider playing community in the alternative soccerscape in Europe and beyond.



Figure 36. F3C #1.3SF in Colombia (Courtesy of F. Olaya)



Figure 37. F3C #2. Logo. (Courtesy of F. Olaya)

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Figure 38. Tritball Flyer 2018. 3SF in North America (Courtesy of Tritball)



Figure 39. 3SF at the TATE 2019. (Personal Collection)



Figure 40. 1st 3SF Asian Championships, Malaysia 2016 (Courtesy of BB)

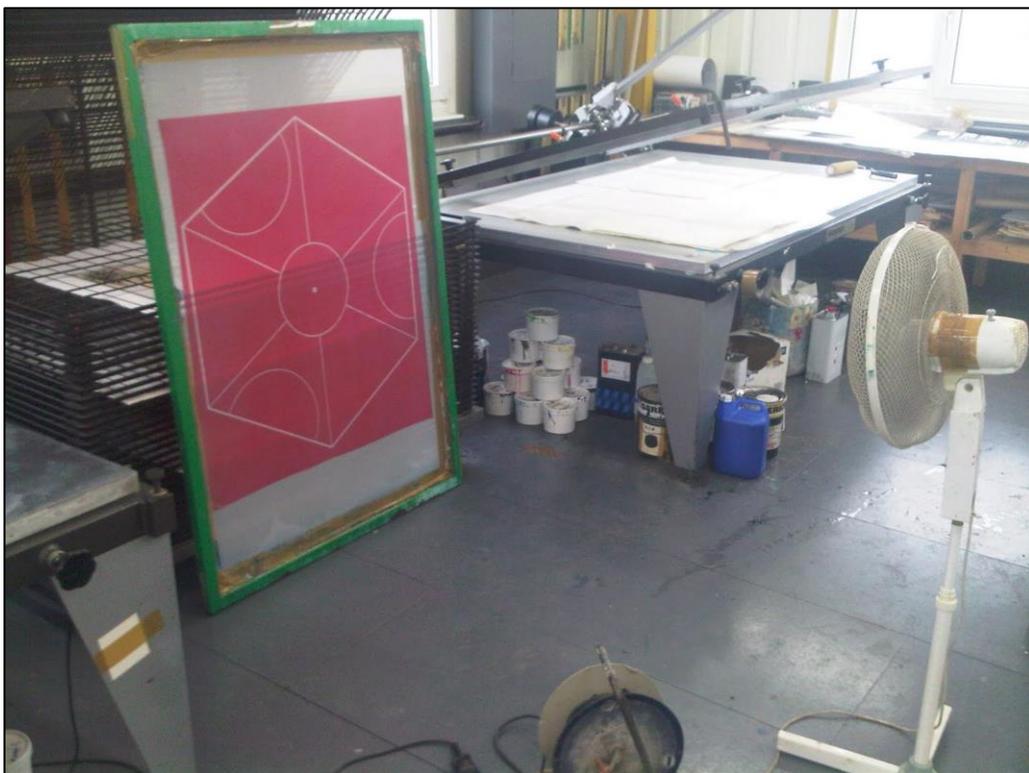


Figure 41. Table 3SF in the Workshop 2010. (Courtesy of Free Studio)



Figure 42. New Cross Flyer 2016. (Courtesy of NXI)



Figure 43. Calcio D'angolo 3SF in Italy 2014. (Courtesy of L. Blissett)



Figure 44. Abbotsford Triolectics, 3SF in Melbourne 2017. (Courtesy of 3SFAUS)



Figure 45. 3SF and Coke Zero (Courtesy of Copyleft)



Figure 46. PP3 in Colombia 2016. (Courtesy of F. Olaya)

Chapter 7. Afterlife

On the 11th of August 2019, three goals were set up in the shadow of the imposing red brick façade of the TATE Modern. Here, 3SF was being utilised within the ‘Who Are Ya?’ Football Art and Identity Festival’. Against this impressive backdrop the game gained further institutional legitimacy as an emerging alternative sport. The accompanying exhibition in the main gallery space included a series of artefacts and memorabilia from ‘3SF History’, although in truth, these seemed more a testament to New Cross Irregulars recent World Cup triumph than anything else. The programme made no mention of the Situationist origins of the game or its use as a playful form of political protest. Equally surprising given the location, there were also none of Jorn’s paintings or ceramics on display, despite his international renown as an artist. As I crouched down by the pitch to get a photo of the first ‘exhibition’ match of the day, the sunlight crept past the public service credos plastered across the glass panels of the roof which read – FREE AND OPEN TO ALL. A phrase I reflected on at length on my cycle home that evening.

Two and a half weeks later, Strategic Optimism Football Club released an extensive press release detailing the club’s ‘auto-dissolution’ in protest at recent developments of the game. Sent from the birth place of the visionary artist and founder of Letterism, Isodor Isou, in Botosani, South Romania, it stated,

In 10AP [2018 vulg.] a group of reactionary football specialists unilaterally announced an ‘Alternative Three-Sided Football World Cup’ in Madrid...Now, reactionary forces within the former New Cross Irregulars camp have conspired to take the game into the official auspices of the Tate, thus ensuring its complete destruction and replacement with a caricature, a pitifully mummified cultural commodity...While everyone is now trying to get into three-sided football, we’re doing our best to get out of it. We leave it to the ‘International Movement of

Proletarian Animists' to construct a new world from our ashes. Let the 1th game begin!

And with that, one of the driving forces behind 3SF over the last decade was no more. Despite instigating various disruptive interventions into the 3SF Leagues in London and at the international tournaments of Silkeborg, Kassel, and in Madrid, the time had come to disown what was once an autonomous anti-capitalist parodic critique now lamentably and irretrievably 'recuperated' into the sports-industrial-complex.

Introduction

SOFC's characterisation of 3SF's recent 'sportisation' as solely a reactionary or destructive act (however tongue in cheek), does little justice to the ways in which sporting iterations of the game provide a site through which players continue re-imagine and practically institute meaningful change in society. It is worth remembering at this point that Jorn's 'playful theorizations' were never conceived of as rigid concepts to be interpreted to the letter. Instead they were devised as 'open creations' which would be defined as "a continual evolution of thought in relation to an evolving culture" (Kurczynski, 2017: 157). In this sense, the following analysis chapter traces the recent 'evolutions' within 3SF from 'class war' intervention to classroom tool.

For Lefebvre, any attempts to realise conceptual ideas in the 'fully lived' space necessarily require 'authoritarian' acts of enclosure (1991). As such, through such acts of sporting 'enclosure', (through codification and the introduction of uniformity, rules and structure), 3SF may have been 'recuperated' within the 'mechanics of conformity' associated with two sided competitive football, but in this popular cultural form it has also reached a much wider demographic than 'haiku' football interventions or labyrinthine parodic texts of the London Psychogeographical Association have been able. In this sense, over the last decade, players of 3SF from across the globe have had to ask difficult questions as to what kind of

social transformation they would like to see through the game. Also, how best to secure 3SF's long term future as a sustainable and accessible sporting practice. Indicative of the 'loosening' that can occur as activist projects or social movements (sporting or otherwise) develop in response to the needs of a wider social group, the 3SF community has had to contend with those who feel that the game should stay true to its origins as an obscure and inaccessible form of political critique, and others who seek to break free from these ties and define the game on their own terms.

As prominent former Situationist, Vaneigem states, "radical theory belongs to whoever causes it to progress" (1972: 141). With this thought in body and mind, my final analysis chapter focusses on participants who have taken the game to new social, sporting and political contexts and offered a tangible 'afterlife' to the game. My analysis therefore appraises how players have 'progressed' or developed the game in recent years as an alternative DIY sport and pedagogical device. By charting these developments through the embodied experiences, (and aspirations of those directly involved), it will demonstrate the complex dynamics at play in the wider social life of 3SF. Also, how 3SF is indicative of how social actors imagine, perceive, and realise, diverse relationships to community and politics through football.

Removed from the cultural context of the game's emergence, I will show how 3SF provides meaning as a practical tool, engendering a sense of agency and direct political praxis in everyday life. However, it is also one reflective of desires and needs for both a more united and cohesive community and an 'ethical' anti-capitalist sport. As such, this chapter shows how 3SF 'resonates' for players and coaches as a form of 'popular trilectics' in the alternative soccerscape and beyond. This analysis begins by highlighting how 3SF offers a reflective space for players to consider the limitations of contemporary politics. Next, it situates 3SF as part of a movement aiming to reform 'football' and nurture a sense of bottom up community (and belonging) in grassroots settings. Thirdly, it considers 3SFs 'afterlife' through its practical application in pedagogical contexts. Lastly - through an appraisal of 3SF's uneven transmission as a 'global game' - the chapter problematizes a

universal analysis of the social-bodily processes that 3SF is implicated within. As the Colombian case study of F3C will demonstrate, local 'accents' continue to inflect and influence the trajectory of the game abroad.

A Clarification on the Concept of 'Community'

Before I begin, it is important to acknowledge the complexity, fluidity and ambiguity of the concept of community (and to a lesser extent nation) which is used throughout this final analysis chapter. Both these terms suggest forms of connectivity and belonging which are in part based within material social relationships and also within what Anderson (2006) describes as 'imagined', or what Cohen calls 'symbolic' social relationships and cultural identities (1985). As a popular term community is therefore "imbued with all the richness associated with human interaction" (Brown et al, 2008: 303). I therefore recognise the ways in which participants describe 'community' in this chapter when related to 3SF as diffuse and ambivalent.

Community is a contested concept, not least when related to how football (more broadly) is seen as representative of a distinct form of civic and local identity in popular discourse. As such, within this chapter 'community' is employed by participants as a broad heuristic term to touch upon multiple issues of belonging in sport. This includes the rejection of the alienating spaces of elite two sided football for 3SF players; the desire to build and nurture DIY links with local businesses and people through the game; through to the conception of a wider 3SF 'communitarian' ethos which is shared with other players across the globe.

In each case the term of community in my interviews is imbued and invested with multiple meanings particular to the context at hand. It may well be understood as a temporary reflexive unity found within the liminal moments of playing 3SF, or equally, as one implicitly bound to the desire for a more rooted sense of self and 'togetherness' within the material spatial environments of play. Either way, it is frequently employed in a positivist sense by

participants to suggest 'a special way of being together' which may be lacking in other aspects of social actors lives (Blackshaw, 2008: 326).

Asger Who? Moving on and Reaching Out in 3SF

32 of the 44 players interviewed for my project disagreed that 3SF should be bound to the dense trielectic concepts of Asger Jorn. Of these, many didn't feel the obscure political critiques associated with early iterations of the game were relevant for the future of 3SF as a sport. Most knew little to nothing about the origins of 3SF beyond the key figures and dates of its first practical realisation. However, players were invested in what 'three sided sport' or trielectic sport, could demonstrate about wider society as a popular practice. The following responses are indicative of the various ways in which players sought to actively move 3SF beyond its emergent context.

Detailing the tensions at the 2018 3SF tournament held in Madrid (which had led to separate sporting and non-sporting matches across the city), Chris V found little use in any practical application of the associated concepts and theories surrounding 3SF which did not appeal to a wider public,

You know you don't have a patent on what is 3SF - it's up to the people who play it...
You see I read Jorn and I thought well this is also very crazy stuff... you know 40
years later I don't have to stick to that theory to develop it further

(Chris V)

Similarly, Geoff - a founder member of Philosophy Football FC and a key organiser of a number of formalised 3SF international events across Europe - also explained the limits of dogmatic approaches to the game when aiming to reach beyond a small artistic and political cognoscenti.

Reality is more stubborn than theory! If 3SF is going to expand it needs to find that balance, on the one hand being critical and on the other hand, having to engage with, you know, on a more popular level...with people. If you take a completely purist line on it...not everyone is going to read Asger Jorn before they play!

(Geoff)

Sami also typified this new pragmatic approach to the sport, where 3SF players could express themselves and have fun away from the 'theoretical posturing' which he had initially experienced in the hexagon in London.

...a lot of the guys who were talking about 3SF as having some kind of political importance were self-indulgent...They were talking about it being useful for devising street fighting plans and its not!! Its really not, there is just such a romanticisation of the 68' barricades thing and its not viable....

(Sami)

Indicative of more 'viable' attempts which have been made to move the game towards a wider public, Phillipe, member of the 'Pied la Biche' arts collective had used 3SF in a number of curatorial events and public workshops in France. He wanted 3SF to actively engage the public and 'hard to reach' communities in giving access to contemporary art. As such, this meant framing the game along recognisable 'footballing' lines.

...we wanted it to be understandable by everyone...to organise 3SF tournaments but make it played by regular two-sided football players not at all interested in contemporary art and not knowing what was the theory behind 3SF.

(Philippe)

Equally for Sally O, the artist, writer and curator responsible for 3SF matches held at The Whitechapel Gallery 2010, 3SF was an accessible public outreach tool for her creative practice. For her, 3SF's future as a popular practice was more important than the dogmatism from what she described as 'stale psychogeographers'.

(3SF) is an artefact, a historical artefact! ...the most politically important aspect is it shows something so monumental as football can be done in another way which is assumed is the only way...my role was to do stuff, exciting stuff and just get out there with it. I had no idea it was being played with any regularity...

(Sally O)

As the above responses illustrate, in 'getting out there' with 3SF (as an accessible sporting form in curatorial contexts) we can understand the game as offering what Lunn has termed 'transgressive moments'. In this way, the sporting activity of 3SF as a public outreach tool problematized the everyday situation of football and was able to include players from a wide demographic. In this process of popular 'loosening', 3SF had the ability to "freshen perceptions...cleanse the senses and language of routine...to de familiarize expected and ordinary connections between things" (Lunn, 1982: 34).

Reflecting on my first experiences of playing 3SF - in which I had no reference point beyond hearing about the competitive sport through a prominent left wing football podcast - it was this subversive distortion of football which had political power. Its form not its theory offered something immediately recognisable and yet also radically transformative. It made strange the everyday and led me to question what I had previously expected from sport. In this sense, it provided a platform for me (and as I subsequently found out) for others to question what football could mean as a form of 'popular triolectics'.

3SF as Popular Triolectics

Given my formative experiences of 3SF, I wanted to understand if the practice of the sport - on its own terms- had an equally restorative function for other recent players of the game. Also, what players envisaged the sport of 3SF could achieve if put to wider social use. 36 of 44 participants mentioned during our interviews in this regard how 3SF had helped them think about divisive issues within society. For 32 of 44 it also offered an everyday context to deconstruct the binary nature of capitalist relations through sport (see also Chapter 5). It was also a triolectic practice that, for a majority (27 of 44), was more reflective of the 'complexity' of everyday social relations.

If as Ennis suggests, sport provides an 'institution of release' and "a meta-social interpretation of the complexity of social reality in a relatively comprehensible manner" (2010: 33), then it is telling how 3SF in this popular context provided an outlet for participants to express dissatisfaction at the quotidian contemporary political contexts in which games were taking place. In formalised sporting contexts 3SF as a triolectic sport therefore became a 'meta-social' tool to think about and exchange ideas about the excesses of capitalism and a perceived erosion of democracy in society.

Due to the 'triolecular' approach to sporting collaboration and communication, 3SF also formed a practical part of an internationalist philosophy to enable players to express solidarity with social causes and anti-capitalist political projects. The distinctions made between 3SF and two sided football in sporting settings also gave an anchor for participants to reflect on what was lacking or problematic in contemporary professional football. In providing this comparison, sporting 3SF held potential for players to dismantle wider habits or cultural assumptions. The following interview excerpts indicate how these issues were negotiated through contemporary sporting iterations of the game.

Chris V, framed 3SF as a 'triolecular' stand against the divisive nature of capitalism and the contemporaneous political climate in Germany. He felt that 3SF had a key sporting role to

play within the 'social mission' of Dynamo Windrad FC, an alternative football club seeking to engender social change and foster solidarity with the most marginalised in German society through inclusive sports.

I see 3SF as something which can symbolise a break up of this binary thinking within society. When there is a third party you don't know what to do! Its not about winning or losing anymore...its more about like having fun with people and cooperating with people...Its more of a political act to say no to capitalism. Its not about survival of the fittest and making profits...I don't care about that! ...we have to do something and three sided sport can be a good place to do that because it brings you together...its something that people are searching for...

(Chris V)

By 'shifting' popular perspectives of how football could be practiced, Miguel, of Inter Melon, also related the transformative potential of triolectics in 3SF to his formative experiences of political compromise in his home country of Portugal.

...I think it can teach a lot about dynamics, about polarisation, definitely there is a big lesson to be learned about politics there. What I mean about politics is you think about the United States, or the UK where you have a very clear two party system, you have a centre right and a centre left system, no matter how you want to paint Corbyn these days. On the other hand you have Portugal which is a three...er very much a five party system...so its very common to have to negotiate a way into the government. I think there is a lesson to be learned there personally, which is the ability to negotiate and not to be drawn to one extreme or the other

(Miguel)

Indicative of a large range of responses in my sample, Mark D saw the desire to experiment with three team sporting forms as a practical reaction against both political divisions in society and the restrictive nature of normative competitive two-sided sport.

...3SF is much more akin to the contestations of real life, this turning life into a black or white is what happens when people try and divide each other, to create an 'us and them' situation. Thats how so much of the world works, East vs West, Conservative vs Labour, Republican vs Democrat... there is this constant separation

(Mark D)

In these sporting contexts, 3SF provided a practical challenge to wider polarising binary discourses be they political, social, or sporting. This was something which also resonated across the Atlantic, where the 'Tritball' iteration is played in Elmore County, Alabama. The potential of a three teamed sport to help young people develop their communication skills was reflected on by Jon M who felt 3SF could engender a more stable political climate in America in general.

...Three sided anything! There's applications outside of sports that I can see...I mean heck three party politics would be a lot better than the system we have now I think.

(Jon M)

The potential for 3SF as a practical demonstration of 'trialectic sport' also resonated with Francis, who saw interactions on the field as symbolic of the process of negotiation that was needed in everyday life. He enthusiastically described the politics on the field as an urgent, reflexive and necessary dynamic needed to 'transform the world'. For him 3SF's power was not contingent on contextual theoretical knowledge but the tangible effect of simply playing new cooperative forms of sport and applying those embodied feelings to wider contexts in life.

...It's not people trying to make up ideas about things that don't need to be discussed! In three way football you actually see it in motion and it is obvious! You're just doing it!...But you wouldn't be doing it unless you've been playing 3SF!

(Francis)

Similarly, Lutz, a veteran goalkeeper for Lokomotiv Kassel, when recalling his first game of 3SF, related how the game could engender a whole new critical approach to the world for players.

...you have to switch some neutrons in your mind and this takes quite a while...I see it as a way to teach something to people like, OK, let's try something new. It doesn't have to be the way it is. Once you understand how it works, it can lead to the point that in real life...that you are starting to think new about other things as well.

(Lutz)

The 'trialectic spirit' of three team football has been used a number of times as a popular sporting device to stage matches of solidarity with clubs and teams from across the globe. In this regard political exhibition matches have been held in Germany, Italy, Spain and Turkey. These provided spectacular and easily recognisable forms of critique which used the cultural signifier of football to break down divisions and highlight political causes. Typical of responses from players involved in these games, Will S explained how the opportunity to do politics and nurture international solidarity through trialectic football was a vital part of the revolutionary struggle. For him,

You can work towards a revolution and enjoy kicking a ball around its not a zero sum game. You can do a lot of 'soft politics' through 3SF... politics is part of life, sport is part of life, sometimes they collide and people should embrace that really

(Will)

As the above responses demonstrate, 3SF when defined as an 'alternative sport' provided a productive site through which players reflected on the nature of democracy and how alternative forms of football could be utilised as a tool to nurture solidarity in fractious, politically charged times. In these contexts players felt the game also provided a tangible way to fight against the rise of the right wing, to neo liberal capitalism, and a chance to do 'soft politics' in an inclusive sporting setting.

For Kreft, "sport goes on under the suspension of everyday life order, but still inside everyday life...the place of sport is still part of life, not of dreams" (2012: 146). Therefore, despite the liminal or transient experiences triolectic football provides for players, it is necessary to understand alternative sporting spaces as holding a 'fragile autonomy' which are invested with participant's everyday concerns. Thus, as the above interview extracts demonstrate, analysis of 'sporting' 3SF players points to how social actors use alternative sports to negotiate wider issues in their lives. With this point in mind, the following section will consider how 3SF can be placed within a wider alternative soccerscape. Also, what its popular use may tell us about the perceived state of 'modern football' and the opportunity the game can offer as a form of community organising.

Against Modern Football?

As Zirin reminds us, "sports are more than just a sounding board for war, graft, and mind-numbing moralism. They can also be a place of inspiration that doesn't transcend the political but becomes the political...Politics are remote and alien to the vast majority of people but the playing field is where we can project our every thought, hope, and fear" (2008: 144). In this sense, the politics of practicing '3SF' as a triolectic sport enabled players to rethink their relationship to football and to project a better world in the process. It

allowed them to articulate latent political desires and to imagine what a transformed football could mean in society.

Over the last decade, in particular following the establishment of the London 3SF League in 2012, playing 3SF has become a practical critique of professional two-sided football. This had led to a changing attitude and engagement within 29 of the 44 participants I interviewed who referenced the lack of atmosphere at top flight football stadiums; a despair at the corruption of mainstream football governance; rising ticket prices and the alienating consequences of treating soccer fans as 'customers' in the upper echelons of football as part of the reason for turning towards the game. Also, just over half of the participants, on a semi-regular basis, attended local non-league football matches where the atmosphere was described as amongst other things 'more authentic', 'raucous', 'joyous' and 'fun'. This shows the inherent links which are being made between recent participation in 3SF and wider alternative football practices.

For 30 of 44 participants interviewed, 3SF was an alternative to 'modern' football. It was therefore a viable alternative away from the hyper commodified commercialised contexts of the elite two-sided game. In this regard, involvement in 3SF was about investing time and energy in a more 'authentic' and 'inclusive' form of the beautiful game. Also, it was one which engaged in the local 'community'. Teams such as Clapton CfC, Dulwich Hamlets, Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls, Hamburg's Sainkt Pauli and FC United of Manchester; were all referenced by players during interviews with respect to a wider cultural milieu within which participants placed 3SF.

Within these 'engaged' alternative football contexts, 3SF has taken on many of the narrative frameworks for resistance also associated with other grass-roots football initiatives. These also seek to reform or resist wider trends in the two sided game. Given the similarities, for my research it was therefore important to question whether 'sporting 3SFers' saw the game in line with wider social transformationalist trends in the alternative soccerscape. Or in the

words of Kennedy and Kennedy, if they wanted to see their alternative game “based on principles of self-management, anti-commercialism, and community organizing” (Kennedy & Kennedy 2016: 102).

When questioned on the opportunities for commercial sponsorship within the sport (which has been offered a number of times by the drinks manufacturer Red Bull, amongst others), or to make individual players pay to play (like similar scale 5-a-side matches of amateur two-sided football) a vast majority of those involved in regular matches (37 of 44) saw this as antithetical to the ‘triolectic aims’ of the game. Which they thought should remain free at the point of access and without affiliation to commercial enterprise or official institutions. Equally, anti-FIFA and UEFA sentiments were expressed by the vast majority of participants who had joined the game since 2012 (28 of 33 participants).

For Numerato, “engaged supporters are not social theorists. Hence, they tend to perceive the struggle against ‘modern’ football in terms of single issues rather than in relation to the plurality of meanings that can be identified at the level of abstract theorizing” (2014: 120). With this extended to the ‘excessive players’ of the game, the following section will demonstrate how 3SF as an alternative form of football becomes part of wider DIY narratives seeking to build community and connection; albeit framed within singular discourses surrounding football and the alienating effects of its hyper commodification.

3SF as a Return to Grassroots?

The possibilities of ‘transforming football’ through a three-sided alternative was evident in a number of responses which equated 3SF to a return to the ‘roots’ of football. Omer described games he was involved in as analogous to the emancipatory potential of the various codes of association football in the middle of the nineteenth century.

...can you imagine how revolutionary football was as a game when it first came to the surface. I just see three sided as the next step on that evolution...

(Omer)

Will S linked the game to a return to the pre modern folk game and in stark contrast to the anodyne nature of the Premier League which he had recently stopped watching.

(3SF) is like the roots of football...I mean football's roots exist in Bank Holidays, 'free for all's between villages, where everyone would just kick a ball up and down between places, which is a world away from the Premiership now isn't it?

(Will S)

For Francis 3SF was simply defined as,

...an expectation for football to be better

(Francis)

When asked how 3SF was reflective of the current state of football, many participants related a growing dissatisfaction with the elite game and the systemic need for change. For Ben B, 3SF was a part of 'alternative grassroots football' and was another tangible way to have a connection to the local 'South London community' through football. He placed 3SF alongside 'Kickabout Union' (A charity run 'Friendly football' initiative in Blackheath) and his devoted support of Dulwich Hamlets FC, as part of a 'critical mass' that was questioning the values of 'mainstream football'.

...so now we are at a point where, there are enough people that are passionate about football but not about a lot of the values it represents...(grassroots football) allows for open communities and forging a friendlier football and a better football.

(Ben B)

Mark M also equated the support of his 'local non-league club' and obvious enthusiasm for playing 3SF as linked to a desire for a more 'rooted' and 'ethical' relationship to football. He further explained,

You know the money is going to community projects at Haringey, likewise in Clapton and Dulwich...There is a principle there that you want to put your money, energy and passion into...for a group of people that represent you ideologically as well as geographically!

(Mark M)

Likewise for Lawrence, playing 3SF was bound to a desire to 'connect' with other people through a wider alternative culture in amateur football. For him, following Lewes FC (as opposed to his former support for Manchester United) and playing 3SF was a response to the banality and commercialism of the professional game.

I think there is all sorts lacking in modern life. I mean there is a reaction to...since the Premier League came around and like all of the money and all of the bullshit that comes with it...Yeah a lot of people are turning their backs on that...they are looking for a 'proper' connection.

(Lawrence)

Building upon this sense of 'connection' between sport, politics and location, Alex was attracted to both 3SF and Clapton CfC at around the same time in 2016. His response stood out as the most explicate evocation of what alternative forms of football in London offered as a 'political' player and fan. The small scale and collective non-hierarchical nature of 3SF and Clapton CfC was a key driver in his motivations to become a part of the outreach committee at the club and to play the game.

It was definitely a half rejection through political means, half through economics! I mean I went to Spurs a couple of times but I can't afford 40 or 50 quid to go and watch football...

He further described how he had joined Clapton CfC soon after discovering 3SF and found both to be a leftist sporting / political space which he could invest his energy into.

...the football might not be as good but I'd get to have this really exciting cross over of left wing politics and sport, which I'd not really experienced before that time...the football was a coming together and like a vehicle for sort of, left wing activists to share ideas which weren't necessarily connected to what was going on, on the pitch. ...It was more of an exciting space to meet people...It was very much a base of people on the left...a lot of punks, antifascists, then through the flags and banners as well...chants about refugees, or migrants... and then at half time very kind of active political messages from fans.

(Alex)

Within the context of a wider alternative football movement, 3SF became part of player's attempts to foster new relationships to football, to politics and the local community. It also offered players the opportunity to reflect on what the purpose of football should be in society and how best this 'social use' could be enacted, from below. In this respect, 3SF also

became a tool to realise and consider why these alternative spaces existed and were needed in contemporary culture for players.²¹

Self-Management and Autonomous Agency in 3SF

The sense of autonomy, community and the 'DIY spirit' found in London games of 3SF was key for a number of participants. The 'small-scale' and participatory nature of matches, the emergent club identities and the ability to shape the form of the game was an important aspect as to why players were drawn to the hexagon. Richard E described how he was not active in 'politics' prior to his involvement in 3SF. However, he found a community at Fordham Park through which players could control and develop a new form of 'democratic football' together.

The thing that first brought me there was this funny little union of football outcasts ...we had our own thing that we can create, because we have our own ideals. Just because we love football doesn't mean we need to be complicit in the larger evils of it! We can re purpose it for ourselves!

(Richard E)

This tallied with Owen, who saw 3SF as a 'blank canvas' to nurture a transformative 'football' outside of pre-existing systems and contra to the worst excesses of the two-sided game.

²¹ Indicative of the changing narratives which participants have developed in and around the sport, the 2021 3SF World Cup is scheduled to be held at Champion Hill in South London. The home ground of the football 'hipster club' par excellence, Dulwich Hamlets FC. A club symbolic of a rejection of the worst excesses of professional football.

...the thing is, because we are starting at the start, we get to decide how three sided is governed, or what it is for...not what football is, but what it can do...(in two sided) If you want to get past a certain point eventually you have to, you know, work with the FA or FIFA or UEFA and I think they are all just too far gone...they are capitalist, neo liberal, all that stuff. I like the idea of providing an alternative. I guess I mean I want to show that you can do these things without commercial interests. Without having capitalism getting its grubby hands on our beautiful sport.

(Owen)

Aside from highlighting the 'ontologically uncertain' position that football continues to hold in UK society, between community asset and commodity form, Owen's words demonstrate how 3SF in this sporting context may become a tool for players to express anti-capitalist ideas which directly relates to DIY sports ability to enact small scale change in people's lives. For Owen, 3SF was a transformative form of resistance imbued with a communitarianism and DIY sensibility. Through an anti FIFA and UEFA stance which was held by most participants, playing 3SF was also an acknowledgment that sport was inherently political and in need of new cooperative trajectories.

Chris JR also related 3SF to achieving small scale change through football. In this case the most tangible impact of 3SF for him was as a DIY cultural practice which showed that alternative ways to live were attainable in the here and now.

You know it is a suck it and see kind of thing...you are able to try it on this level and to have a go at it and see where it goes. Maybe on a societal or political level its much more difficult to see those changes. What this does is show us that actually at a ground level we can start making changes that will actually show us how things work. It is a bit like saying if we devolve things to a certain level and show that it works in this microcosm then maybe we can think about it elsewhere....

(Chris JR)

In Edinburgh, Ainslie, concurred with the idea that 3SF offers a way to practically change society for the better due to its DIY cooperative sensibility. He explained his 'active' political relationship to sport through 3SF.

We are allowed to have it to ourselves and that feels more comfortable than just being like "overthrow everything"...what I feel needs to happen is, 'do' what you think should be happening!

(Ainslie)

Indicative of the ways in which the sport of 3SF provided a way to collectively challenge hegemonic sporting practices for social actors, Timothea also expressed the political importance of directly enacting change through a triolectic form of sport. For her it was a 'normal' reaction to the material conditions of everyday life.

It's a modelling for a better version of things...It is (political) yes and that feels transgressive....But then it doesn't feel like that when you are playing with a bunch of people who have accepted this idea.

(Timothea)

Timothea's reflections on the quotidian nature of 3SF in Scotland shows how playing the sport regularly was indicative of wider non-conformist traits in DIY communities who, "refuse to view their activities as the outside world does". For these 3SF players, "the practices engaged in are normal and right...Yet these feelings and perceptions of normality don't predate participation; they often come from immersion." (Cooper, 2014: 5) Therefore, as a 'modelling for a better way' and 'a new typology' of praxis, 3SF becomes an everyday political act for social actors, without the pressures of a revolutionary agenda for seemingly insurmountable transformative change.

If as Macdonald suggests participation in modern sport can be understood as a ‘mechanics of conformity’, then 3SF as a ritualised alternative sport can be understood as a transformational triolectic intervention into the ‘mechanics of conformity’ in football culture (2012: 355). It offers the ability for players to rethink and transform their relationship to sport and the world around them. However ‘normal’ it may seem after some time playing the game, 3SF therefore reveals the “radical kernel” which lies latent in motivations to become involved in alternative sporting practices. Although seemingly trivial or removed from wider political life, these alternative practices become utopian political projects through which players express what Lefebvre would term ‘a way forward’.

3SF as DIY ‘Community’

An emergent theme from my interviews with players involved in the regular league formats (29 of 44) at Fordham Park and London Bridge was the sense of belonging and community found in its nascent club culture. The creative ways in which participants were able to create material culture through the design of their own strips, websites, club crests and to develop their own club ethos was a source of much pride. It created a sense of ‘tangible collectivity’ for many players involved in the game. Equally, 3SF players also developed strong bonds to the community spaces in which the games were taking place. Although not linked to a revolutionary anti-capitalist program, the game offered an everyday setting to build links to community. This points to another key alignment of 3SF within Kennedy and Kennedy’s transformational DIY paradigm.

Philosophy Football FC were undoubtedly able to enhance their internationalist approach to sport through their club shirts which printed famous quotes from thinkers such as Camus and Barthes (Roland not Fabien!). However, having joined Philosophy Football FC not long after arriving in London in 2015, Miguel described the sense of community he found at the club as a key part of its communitarian politics.

... what drew me in was this sense of belonging. So, I've always played for Philosophy and Rob usually made us take this picture before the game. I always used to share it with my parents and my sisters back home...to see us all standing there in our red t shirts and black shorts, it was really special!

(Miguel)

This community focus at Fordham Park was also echoed by SOFC's Matthew who equated 3SF players in London as a 'family'.

...in London you've got a whole lot of different communities, and you tend to get together based on interests rather than locality... It was like a family, and it kind of fit what I was looking for....I enjoy being a part of something that is getting people together really!

(Matthew)

For the team of Polish builders who regularly played at Fordham Park and 3SF World Cups, the establishment of Polish Husaria 3SFC in London was also a way to celebrate some 'heroic' Polish culture within the 3SF community in Deptford. Club captain and ever present, Greg M explained,

Yeah, its a bit of history for 3SF. Its a bit of...being kind of...Husarian is, you know, is like a bit of an honour name...to name yourself Husaria you need to have guts and celebrate where you're from...so that was nice to do in London with everyone too!

(Greg)

Underscoring participant's diverse motivations for involvement in the game was the 'topophilic' affection for where 3SF is played regularly on Deptford Green in London. Jilly compared watching 3SF games at Fordham Park as having a similar 'community' quality to

matches she had attended at Dulwich Hamlets with her son. Each alternative football context provided her with a sense of participation in the South London community. For her, 3SF was a chance to come together and enjoy public space with others in the area. The frequent auxiliary players who joined from the adjacent Pentecostal church were a bonus!

That local feeling of being involved...community. That seems to be my word of the day!...(3SF) For me, I suppose it is a belonging...sharing something together,...you are kind of all in it together, there's just something about that...You know, its an ordinary pitch in a little park, not well looked after, but its very much in the hub of the community there. You know you have all the people who have been to church and are all hanging about, and all the kids all dressed up in their Sunday best, and they all really just want to come and play football. So you have all of that going on around it, and somehow thats special...

(Jilly)

New Cross as a Community Sports Club

Despite apparently indicative of 3SF's 'recuperation' and its inevitable slide into a 'win-at-all-costs' competitive sport, the establishment of New Cross Irregulars as a South London 3SF club, was also a practical way for the team to build links with other community spaces in the vicinity of the ground. Since the establishment club in 2012, Owen had volunteered (and encouraged others to join) at New Cross Learning, a volunteer run library, bookshop and community centre (formerly known as the New Cross Peoples Library) which was proudly 'run by the people for the people' and situated in the heart of New Cross.

The tangible ways in which the team had become involved in this local community was a key part of the clubs 'triolectic' identity for him. Over the last 5 years Owen had instigated regular film nights held at the social centre and also helped coordinate and curate a football

podcast series based at the nearby secondary school with the help of other 3SF players. He believed 3SF was a unique way to engage people involved in local social issues and to come and play inclusive sport together. Articulating the motivations behind the local sponsor which adorned the first official home shirt, Owen further explained how New Cross embodied the values of 3SF in London as an 'accessible grassroots football'. For him, football clubs of all iterations needed to 'reach out' to local charities and help foster social cohesion.

...I wanted to build a football club that had a place in the community and did what I think football clubs 'should' do. For one thing we put New Cross Learning on our shirts...I think if you go there now there is still a shirt hanging in the window!

(Owen)

Former Irregular, Jon M, also saw the community projects that New Cross Irregulars were involved in as an important form of sporting advocacy. It was promoting the game whilst also making a positive difference to people's lives. As he reflected on in our interview, handing 3SF flyers out in local libraries was a key part of spreading the word about a 'free' local alternative football initiative.

...we were actively recruiting people to think differently about football, to think about their community and to think about cooperation. That's what matters to me in football!

(John M)

Through efforts to promote and expand what was an alternative form of three team sport he felt able to engage with wider social groups in the community. Here 3SF became a practical way to help change the culture of football for the better. What was more important than 'winning' were the possibilities 3SF presented to reorient football as a

‘community asset’. John M further explained his hopes for the long term future activities of the club.

If you are doing something you might as well try and effect some positive impact with it!

Me: What would you do?

We would run food bank collections, or we would go into schools and teach kids football, like. I've always wanted to run a match between homeless charities in Islington, Greenwich and Plumstead...because of Ian Wright...

(John M)

Defining 3SF based on participants own terms and within a wider alternative soccerscape has shown how the self-organised and ‘democratic’, nature of the game acted as both a critique of received footballing discourse and a tangible way for social actors to build forms of collectivity and connection with people and place. Also, how 3SF provided a platform for social actors to engage with the local community.

For participants who played, organised or watched the sport in more formalised settings the triolectic ‘anti-capitalist’ possibilities for 3SF to refuse FIFA and UEFA were also interwoven with reflections of an idealised, or nostalgic, return to a time when football was an ‘authentic’ expression of civic identity in contrast to its present position as a commodity form. By expressing the need for alternative trajectories for the sport rooted “in return, in nostalgia for lost times...and a desire for collective engagement” (Bonnett, 2020:84) the responses of players in these contexts are also indicative of how a ‘radical nostalgia’ is employed within the alternative soccerscape. This is yet to be fully acknowledged in existing literature.

In this sense, grassroots football also becomes a way for players (and fans) to ask what is lacking in social life and to imagine a political solution based on a mythic footballing past. Alternative engagements with football therefore become at once an escape from the strictures of everyday existence, a chance to mythologise past cultural forms as a form of 'Retrotopia' (Baumann, 2017), and a way to imagine future forms of association and political belonging not dissimilar to the political project of the magico-Marxists who first played 3SF in the early 1990s.

Codified and formalised sporting forms of 3SF have allowed the game to become embedded and 'normalised' for social actors as everyday DIY community practices. In these sporting contexts, participants described the inherent possibilities of what 3SF could achieve in the future. Responses about this potential 'afterlife' for the game (some of which have been detailed thus far) ranged from 3SF's eventual inclusion in the Olympic Games, being played in large purpose-built triolectic sporting arenas, through to the games use to teach conflict resolution. However, aside from these speculative projections as to 3SF's potential wider social use, unbeknownst to many of these 3SF players, the game has in fact already been instituted in a number of formal and informal educational and pedagogical contexts. The following section will therefore detail the motivations of the 7 participants I interviewed who have utilised the game in coaching and educational sessions. Also, what practical outcomes they felt the sport of 3SF can offer in such contexts.

3SF as Pedagogy

Indicative of the transformative effect that 3SF has had on individual social actors lives, Ben B trained and qualified as an FA and UEFA accredited coach in 2015 after being inspired by his experiences at the 3SF World Cup in Silkeborg. Since qualifying, Ben B has run coaching sessions based on 3SF and integrated the game into his work with International student

groups in North London. During our interview he described how 3SF was useful in formal coaching contexts.

..It teaches players how to cooperate with other people and how to be creative with space...(3SF) was very much a component, a sense of 'completed football ideology' that I would then use in my sessions...Yeah its a fundamental part of how I run my sessions now and it is thanks to that World Cup!

(Ben B)

It was not just in the UK that 3SF has been utilised in coaching contexts. Alabama based soccer coach and referee Jon, and his wife Jane, have been using 'Tritball' since 2016 to help develop youth player's communication skills. For them, the game offered a way to develop self confidence in a less pressurised or competitive sporting environment.

Thats one of the reasons I wanted to introduce it to our region because some of our teams are having a hard time with communication, and in three sided soccer its a must. If you don't have communication then you're not going to do very well...just to show the kids that communication is important and if they can communicate with an opposing team then they could take that into other settings...You know I wish it would pick up a little more momentum over here because the kids that do participate in it have a blast with it...

(Jon)

Yeah...I think thats what the kids liked about it, that they could be more wide open than they normally are with traditional soccer...but at the same time the concept was still there...they still utilised their normal skills but in a new context, with a twist!

(Jane)

Pete worked as a coach for a prominent football education charity based in London when they joined the Triball league in 2017. After playing the game they were also enthusiastic about introducing 3SF as part of the constraints-based training program in secondary schools for the forthcoming 2017/2018 academic year. They explained the inherent potential for 3SF to serve as the basis for reflective classroom based sessions. He described the game as a way to engender wider class discussions about relationships of power in sport.

...you can't just play it and not think about why or how it works..... one way or another you will come away with a different concept than you started off with and thats cool...it forces you to think.

(Pete)

For Francis, offering students a chance to play cooperative three team sport (through the institution of 3SF with his current Year 6 class) was key to his own critical approach to primary school teaching. He believed 'actively' promoting alternative sporting practices was vital to provoke and stimulate discussion with young people about the world. He explained how 3SF could expand horizons and help children develop their creative potential in education.

...It challenges them to consider what their role is within the game that they are playing. So I'm a teacher right, so I hate passivity. Right, and so, it is like a marvellous trick that capitalism has pulled, that idea of passivity is so much what you fight against as a teacher in various ways...and it (3SF) actually questions the previously received structures that they have inherited...it acknowledges a wider range of people...it reaches beyond the competitive element whilst incorporating aspects of emotional make up and intelligence...so its a nice contrast!

(Francis)

The pedagogical potential of using 3SF to engage with a 'wider range of people' in physical education classes was echoed by another recent addition to the Fordham Park games during my time in the field. Hass was responsible for devising and running sports classes for mixed gender and ability groups across South London secondary schools. As a coach he had developed 3SF training drills prior to playing the game himself in Deptford. This was primarily to help improve players' spatial awareness and passing accuracy. He saw 3SF strictly as a sport and valued the various kinds of intelligence and decision making it could nurture. He also wanted the game in future to become a competitive sport with leagues and cup competitions to offer an alternative football idiom.

...the more its done competitively the kids might be like, "do you know what, I prefer this. I want to go into it instead of the usual two sided stuff because I prefer playing this way", especially the kids that got more intelligence than physical power.....So a lot of these technical players...and ive got a lot at my schools, if these things rub then I could be like...'these lot do a three sided league here', "let your son or daughter try this and see how they feel about it" ...I'd love that.

(Hass)

Hass's championing of 3SF was informed by his experiences of the exclusory nature of academy football in South London in the early 2000s, where he held a series of trial apprenticeships with semi-professional clubs. In this regard, 3SF's perceived pedagogical potential was inextricably linked to his own experiences in competitive football. It also points to the personal histories and narratives which lead individuals to seek alternative forms of sport. Through 3SF he was able to develop training routines which privileged sporting intelligence and positioning. For Hass, 3SF was a long term sporting project to change attitudes of players and coaches alike.

I'm all about thinking about the future...(3SF) is a project and they've got to be patient and understand, its a different relationship...again its about letting in people's personalities into the game!

(Hass)

What is significant about the above responses are the multiple ways in which 3SF becomes another distinct form of praxis when 'loosened', instrumentalised, and rationalised in coaching and educational contexts. Despite early practitioners of the game parodically describing the activity as an ideal training mechanism for 'Autonomous Astronauts' preparing for anarchist space exploration, it was through its formalisation and codification that it has found a practical long term 'afterlife'. In this context, 3SF as a structured sporting cultural form has become a productive tool for communication and team building whilst also offering a space to rehearse new forms of social engagement or to challenge students 'passivity'.

As coaches and teachers have discovered and implemented (or indeed reinvented and renamed) the triolectic sport through training drills and exercises, 3SF has become a 'political act' within the everyday context of the classroom. Consequently it has reached an unlikely but receptive audience for triolectic thought. In this sense, we can return to consider the 'productive capacity' of ludus, of constraint based play, bound within rules, structures, codes and institutions. Efforts to make 3SF 'mundane', enclosed and regulated in this regard, have also enriched the application of the game as a further form of popular triolectics in pedagogical and public contexts.

Whilst at times mimicking the 'mechanics of conformity' found in wider sporting practices and also replicating the patriarchal dividend of such symbolic structures, the emergent forms of pedagogical 3SF also offer creative, meaningful and reflective ways for coaches and players to challenge dominant discourses which accompany sports education and youth outreach work. In providing this developmental platform, we can understand the

'sportization' of 3SF as a 'cultural system' which Loy would describe as having undergone a productive process of 'democratisation', 'legitimation' and 'rationalisation' (1968). In short, through the creation of alternative football contexts for 3SF, participants have been able to project, re think and practically play out their own political ideas as to the 'democratic' use of sport in society. Here, 3SF acts as a nascent form of 'popular triolectics'.

Going Global? Towards an 'Accented' Alternative

As it nears its third decade of practice 3SF can now be considered a global game. Matches have been played across five continents of the world, formal clubs have been created, international tournaments have been contested, and associated exhibitions have been curated. Notably, FIFA - football's world governing body - has even produced a short video explaining the sport for new comers to the game. Given this international reach and institutional sporting recognition, it was important within my research to consider the motivations of those who have adapted and continued to develop 3SF abroad. In this sense, my contention is that each iteration of 3SF, (where possible) should be analysed within the cultural milieu within which it is being played. This is in order to explore how the game is imbued with local 'accents' and inflections.

Only with this critical position can we fully understand the complexity of any emergent cultural practice as it spreads beyond its initial nucleus and context. Also, how the game may offer distinct forms of practical consciousness for players within an 'accented' dialectic of milieu and action. Therefore, in line with this contention, 3SF matches staged during the Istanbul Arts Biennale, as a protest against repressive state homophobia should not be analysed in the same way as Under 12 youth soccer training exercises held in the Republican stronghold of Alabama. Equally, 3SF triolectic tournaments played in the West German town of Kassel, (as a way of welcoming and including newly arrived refugees) have a different set

of imperatives to those staged under the moniker of Futbol 3 Colombia (F3C) in the urban environs of Bogota.²²

With the local accents of 3SF in mind and body, the final section of my analysis will chart the unique trajectory of 3SF in Colombia as a form of triolectic football. Here, the game has taken on a specific 'transformational' importance: one which points to another 'afterlife'. Demonstrating the need for such variegated analysis, this concluding section opens up the potential for further sociological studies into the game and considers how social actors have repurposed 3SF in line with sport-for-development projects in this South American context. These promote 'National Unity' and aim to engender social cohesion through augmented forms of 'inclusive' football.

F3C and 'Football for National Unity'

Indicative of the recent international reach of 3SF, Fabio first encountered the game at Athletic Club Fundazioa de Bilbao's 'Thinking Football' festival held in tandem with the Guggenheim Museum in 2012.²³ As an engineer, youth worker and aspiring coach, he was inspired by an exhibition 3SF match held in a bull ring in the city and wanted to bring this new alternative form of football back to his home in Bogota. Later that year, Fabio established a community sports organisation, Futbol 3 Colombia, and codified a new triolectic sport of 'F3C' based on 3SF. Since this formation, 'F3C' matches have been running on a weekly basis in Normandia Park and the surrounding neighbourhoods in the South of Bogota.²⁴

²² My research project remains limited by the occlusion of any representative voices from the Velcom sponsored 3SF tournaments held in Malaysia in 2016 and Belarus during 2012. The Belarussian event was by far the largest 3SF initiative held to date with over 400 teams involved in matches across the country.

²³ Athletic Club de Bilbao are a club who only signs players from the *Euskal Herria* region. Aside from the prevalence of the Basque ball game of pelota across the region, the club are also the popular sporting symbol of Basque autonomy in contemporary Spanish culture.

²⁴ F3C strictly bans the use of advertising and political or religious messages being displayed as part of any team's uniforms and includes a commitment by participants to adhere to sporting conduct, with any bookable offences counting towards the overall score. There is also a stipulation to a complete adherence to the referee committee decisions and if a team scores own goals on purpose then teams also incur penalties.

In contrast to many European-based participants, (who perceived the game as necessarily acting outside of officially recognised sporting frameworks, capitalist relations and institutions), Fabio was more than open to municipal funding, institutional recognition and commercial sponsorship in order to help spread the game. Indicative of this open stance, F3C was awarded a prize in the Urban Sports and New Trends (*Deportes Urbanos y Nuevas Tendencias*) competition in 2013. This award, and the subsequent commercial endorsements and increasing public profile enabled F3C to expand further. This has meant various three-sided sporting activities run in the municipal parks of Bogota with assistance from the District Institute of Recreation and Sports (*Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deporte*). Also, affiliated F3C championships have been funded at *the Universidad Agraria de Colombia* (Agrarian University of Colombia) and F3C workshops in the neighbouring cities of Medellin and Cali.

During our interview, Fabio framed the social importance of F3C (and 3SF) as part of a wider project of reconciliation that promoted ‘creative expression’, ‘understanding’ and ‘social belonging’ through triolectic forms of sport. He was reluctant to frame the game within an explicit political ideological framework beyond the promotion of social cohesion and the inherent health benefits of a recreational physical activity. From his outlier position in Colombia, Fabio also imagined the entire international playing community was united in seeking to promote the codified iteration of the sport.

...Being part of a new sport makes me feel proud and more optimistic about the way communities can face the challenges of daily life...I think that it can affect people and communities where soccer is played in a positive way, because it strengthens friendship and social bonds through recreation....F3C allows you to feel football in a different, fun and recreational way, to encourage sports and friendship. ...it promotes healthy living and distances young people from vices and violence. It allows us (collectively) to reflect on other ways of seeing and feeling the sport of soccer...We created the sports organization ‘Futbol 3 Colombia’ in order to bring

recreation free of charge to children, young people (of both genders) and the most vulnerable groups in the city of Bogota.

(Fabio)

Despite not having a grounding in Jorinian pataphysical theory, Fabio was also passionately committed to the promotion of other 'triolectic' sports in Bogota and beyond. His fervent belief in the popular use of 'triolectic sport' to promote non-binary social cohesion was evident in F3C's concurrent development of Tri-Chess and Ping Pong 3 (PP3). As Figure 46. details, PP3 is a three sided version of table tennis with bespoke hexagonal tables. Several of these tables were installed in public parks in the summer of 2016 whilst political negotiations were taking place to end the protracted civil war in the country. During these reconciliation PP3 games, each player wore a coloured bib and each third of the table was painted in the corresponding colours of Colombia's national flag, symbolising a nationalist spirit. In this context 3SF has a further resonance in demonstrating 'national unity' and playing towards community reconciliation.

3.S.F as 3rd Sector Football?

At this point it is important to understand the emergence of F3C (and its associated triolectic sporting activities) as having a distinct social imperative in contemporary Colombian society. This sets it aside from other 3SF iterations covered thus far in my research and points to the need for such variegated analysis. As Cardenas suggests, in Colombian society over the last decade, "cultural and artistic expressions and notably sport, have been acknowledged by political leaders, international organisations and civil society as powerful allies to advance peace-building" (2016: 4). When placed in this context, F3C finds much commonality with a wider social movement seeking to reclaim football as a tool for social cohesion. It is also a game linked to a concerted top-down effort to counter the

endemic cultural links of football to social divisions, gang violence and associated extortion (Fajardo & Miller, 2017).²⁵

Indicative of this project of footballing rehabilitation, in 2012, (the same year as the foundation of F3C), the recently elected *Partido Social de Unidad Nacional* (Social Party of National Unity), began their electoral term by defiantly putting football at the forefront of their progressive liberal 'Third Way' political agenda (Watson, 2018, 2019).²⁶ Under President Santos, (and inspired by an unlikely political hero in Tony Blair) the new government introduced a number of initiatives to help restore football in public discourse. This included *El Plan Decenal* (The Ten Year Plan) which was implemented by the Ministry of the Interior and set aside municipal funding opportunities for initiatives promoting social cohesion through augmented forms of sport (this included the award received by F3C). Under this reform program football would realise its 'rightful' social use to "benefit and develop society, rather than simply to entertain or to whitewash over social problems." (Watson, 2018: 602) Its aims further stated;

(The Ten-Year Plan)...is the route of action that the country will adopt to strengthen its security, comfort and its coexistence policies...These are related both to professional football as well as amateur and recreational football, as well as to push forward football as a tool for social transformation.

With this transformative agenda in mind, the success, form and visibility of F3C should therefore be considered as not explicitly linked to European iterations of the game, nor as

²⁵ The links between football and organised crime most famously were exposed on the international stage when Andreas Escobar was shot and killed for scoring an own goal during the World Cup in the United States in 1994, sealing Colombia's shock elimination from the tournament they were tipped to win. Such was the influence of organized crime in football during the 1980s and 1990s that the links between criminal activity and football were such that it "signified para- state control of the third sector" and was dubbed 'Narco-football' (Butterworth, 2017:11)

²⁶ It was a centrist political position combining conservative free-market capitalism with liberal democratic social policies and was looking to reject the far right and far left political agendas which had characterised the civil war in the country

part of a DIY football movement. Instead, F3C should be understood structurally as part of a number of specific alternative football initiatives which aim to “celebrate difference and foster pluralism in the context of a changing social project” (Duran & Gine, 2002: 227). In this sense, F3C has compelling analogues with wider third-sector initiatives recently instituted in Colombia as footballing ‘inclusion venues’ (Leixa, 2004; Bajana, 2017).²⁷ These cooperative sporting projects each attempt to bring together communities through modified forms of football, which have been developed as a way to engender ‘community’ after 50 years of protracted internal conflict and civil war. As such the sites of practical consciousness found for players within games of F3C remain unexplored but point to a profitable avenue of further study in the unlikely ‘afterlife’ of Jorn’s open creation.

Conclusion

This analysis chapter has highlighted the enduring ‘Afterlife’ of 3SF for organisers, players and coaches of the codified, structured, sporting iteration of the game. It has analysed how recent participants narrativised and made sense of the disruptive, symbolic and pedagogical potential of 3SF when placed within the alternative soccerscape. In these transformational DIY football contexts, the trielectric sport provided a reflexive platform for players to question the divisive nature of binary politics. Also, it became a collective tool to redefine ‘football’ based on its social use as opposed to its commodity value.

²⁷ In particular Golombiao but also *Commission Nacional para la Seguridad, Comodidad y Convivencia en el Fútbol* [National Commission for Safety, Comfort and Co- Existence in Football]. ‘*Fútbol por la paz*’ (Football for peace), and ‘*Me la juego por las víctimas*’ (I play for the victims) (Watson, 2019) These inclusive sporting initiatives demonstrate the “increasing awareness of the potential of sport as a vehicle to foster the values that are generally associated with peace such as non-violence, open dialogue, understanding and respect” (Cardenas 2016:4). The emergence of Golombiao has many commonalities to F3C albeit on a wider scale and context. As Bajana (2016) suggests, Golombiao is attempting to transform soccer to ‘achieve solidarity’ and is intrinsically linked to the political programme called Colombia Joven (or Youth of Colombia) aimed at ‘bolstering protective environments for girls, boys, teenagers and young adults, to secure their development through the promotion of coexistence, social participation and gender equity’ (2016: 368). Golombiao modifies football to promote social cohesion and offers reflective sessions on the experiences of team work and fair play in sport. Rules are agreed before the game without a referee and must uphold co-existence agreements such as all team members from both teams celebrate when any goal is scored. There are no winners. Instead scores for excellence in upholding ‘co-existence agreements’ are decided collectively after the game between the teams.

This chapter has further shown how the sporting iteration of the game is a site of practical consciousness for players. In this sense, my findings suggest that 3SF belongs to a wider movement of cultural resistance against the hyper commodification of football in 'neo-liberal times'. Within this alternative ludic context, 3SF may offer tangible and productive forms of sporting resistance, and has been used by players in Europe to engender a sense of solidarity, community, and local belonging. This is often bound to an anti-capitalist and internationalist political and sporting DIY philosophy. Moreover, my findings show that 3SF's recent institution in pedagogical contexts may also give the game a further social use as a liminal sporting space through which coaches may be able to foster emotional intelligence and inclusion. In short, it has become a form of 'popular triolectics'

Whether named Tritball, Triball, 3G, or F3C, 3SF has further developed in a global context where its form and structure becomes reflective of 'accented' concerns, wants, desires and needs. Here, it is germane to return to the games founder who attested that, "in its development, any new idea will be connected to its point of origin, to the environment from which it has grown, but it will belong to the environment where it meets a resonance" (Jorn & Tompsett, 1994: 122). In identifying these 'environmental resonances' for 3SF, and through critically analysing how these may depart from the games 'point of origin', my analysis more broadly has considered how counter cultural practices in their realisation and endurance in the 'fully lived space' are 'fragile coalitions'. However, as the final case study of F3C demonstrates, through analysis of such unlikely spaces of 'loosening' and 'belonging' we can further articulate the potential ability for this unique form of 'triolectic' football to enact lasting, transformational change.



Figure 47. LBDL c.2016 (Courtesy of E.Scorehill)



Figure 48. 3SF in Leith, Edinburgh. (Courtesy of ESD)



Figure 49. Looking Forward. 3SF at Deptford Green c.2016-17. (Courtesy of L. Blissett)

Conclusions:

Towards A New Gaze? 3SF Today

Introduction

This thesis has guided the reader through the dynamic and often unstable interrelationships between sporting space, play and activism within the emergent sport of 3SF. In doing so, it provided the first comprehensive ethnographic study into the game and highlighted the difficulties of translating abstract political ideas into a material reality. In this sense, my research argues that 3SF's sociological significance is as a 'fully lived' cultural practice which can be analysed at once within the liminal spaces of the alternative soccerscape, the anarcho-politics of leisure, and as a nascent third-sector pedagogical device.

Privileging the embodied experiences and reflections of those who have played, organised and 'strategically appropriated' the game over the last 25 years, my thesis was situated within the 'dynamic spatiality' of three-sided 'soccer spaces'. It uncovered the multiple 'sites of practical consciousness' (and new gazes) which have been engendered in such hexagonal settings. Moreover, it explored what is at stake (practically and philosophically) when 'excessive' players reshape, redefine, and 'desportize' football from below.

In detailing social actor's attempts to reach beyond pre-existing sporting structures, values and spatial practices, my thesis has shown the contested social fields, fragile coalitions, and 'semantic impertinences' which constitute groups aiming towards transformational societal change. Equally, it highlighted the symbolic power of inherited forms, logics and structures, which in their (conscious and unconscious) replication provide intelligible and productive spaces for some, but also exclude others from spaces of play and politics.

Far from portraying 3SF's adoption of competitive *doxic* logics and ludic sporting forms as a deterministic structural *fait accompli*, my thesis also identified the 'glorious symbolic acts' of reform and playful agency which have occurred within the game. These, I argue, point toward the collective capacity of social actors to resist such symbolic enclosures and exclusory reproductions in sustaining DIY alternative sporting spaces. Also, I argue that creative forms of activism and collective play engender a sense of political renewal and possibility for those involved.

The existential contortions that 3SF players have experienced as a result of the addition of a third team into a binary sporting world were a central component of this thesis. These uncovered broader issues pertaining to the various forms of 'loosening' which have occurred in 3SF as it has been freed from its emergent context and become an alternative competitive sport. This analysis of the sporting 'afterlife' of 3SF further served to highlight the complex cultural meanings and investments which are made to the sport of football in 'neo-liberal times'. Also, how these ontological investments speak to a wider need to challenge the commodification of everyday life through DIY grassroots alternatives.

Having cursorily summarised my thesis above, this final chapter now considers my findings in more depth. It also responds to the variants of the research questions I first articulated in my introduction. Moreover, this chapter assesses my contribution to the field and highlights the further questions or profitable research problems which arise from my analysis.

'Definitive Tensions'

In order to understand the 'dynamism' of 3SF spaces (and as such their social complexity), my first analysis chapter showed the social field of 3SF as fragmented and subject to competing struggles over definition and legitimacy. This approach specifically sought to understand how alternative sporting spaces are produced, sustained and developed by those involved. Also, the tensions that occur within this production. In this regard, (and

through the use of Eichberg's triolectic of sports model) my findings suggest the particularity of 3SF as a distinct emergent sporting space which has had to contend with players seeking 'experiential', 'recreational' and 'achievement' spaces often on the same fields of play.

Through a three stranded analysis of the production of alternative sporting spaces, Eichberg's model primarily was developed to reach beyond the dichotomised rubrics of his German contemporaries who framed sport within the restrictive binaries of amateur/professional, socialist/capitalist, productive/a-productive sport. However, when utilised within my analysis of 3SF it highlighted the motivations and perceptions of 3SF players as dynamic and contingent on 'inner experiences' and cultural conceptions. In this sense, my findings argue for the enduring need for such 'differentiated' and variegated analysis within the sociology of sport. Without this dynamic approach to the wider field, the concept of sport (and the subsequent ethnographic analysis of emergent alternatives) remains problematically static. As do the assumptions based around the singular motivations of those who feel compelled to participate within such alternative activities.

The divergent 'inner experiences' and exteriorised motivations of 3SF players (as shown throughout Chapter 5) are also suggestive of the syncretic and 'fragile coalitions' which make up DIY alternative cultural practices. Furthermore, this finding builds upon the work of Numerato to argue that the game of 3SF is in itself a 'dynamic transmutable form', not just the 'activist complex' occurring alongside the action on the field. I therefore further argue that 3SF is a form of 'activism through football'. It is a reflexive (and recreational) chance to 'queer football' and nurture a space of 'inclusive masculinity'.

My findings suggest that through participation in 3SF social actors felt able to create inclusive sporting spaces away from normative hyper competitive and commodified contexts. In this context, I argue that 3SF acted as a defiant refusal of the hyper masculine nature of the competitive two-sided game for a select sample of players. Also, that 3SF is a DIY reappraisal of what forms of competitive sport (and masculinity) are acceptable (or

desirable) in contemporary culture. Such liminal, expressive and embodied acts show how the playing body in 3SF should be understood as a site of political and social transformation, and thus a form of practical consciousness. This also highlights a potential wider social need for less competitive and more inclusive spaces for football.

However, only through further studies of 3SF and comparable DIY 'desportized' contexts for football in the alternative soccerscape can we draw more broad overarching conclusions about this need and the shifting lines of force in the game. In this sense, I align with Sterchele who calls for more analysis of quotidian 'desportized' contexts. Future comparative studies could profitably ask the extent to which other alternative forms of football have a sustained and lasting place within the fabric of everyday life. Also, how the players involved in such initiatives consequently narrativise, negotiate and articulate their experiences (and inclusive sporting desires).

Due to the highly ambivalent ways in which 3SF players also framed and developed 3SF within a 'recreational' and 'achievement-oriented' paradigm (and the subsequent patriarchal dividend and symbolic violence which occurred from such perceptions and acts), my analysis in Chapter 5 showed the limits of analysing 3SF as a practice which is able to foster inclusive spaces of sporting play. In this regard, my application of Bourdieu is useful to our understandings of how inherited (and what Wheaton terms masculinized) 'schemes of perception' have shaped 3SF over time and space as a competitive sport.

My findings show that 3SF (in London in particular) is a syncretic site where multiple forms of symbolic violence, *hysteresis* and *metanoia* have occurred. Also, that the introduction of leagues and competitive hierarchies fundamentally changed the nature (and motivation) of the play in 3SF over recent years. This formalisation excluded many from playing the game despite 3SF's apparently 'alternative' ethos. Therefore, I contend that we can profitably utilise Bourdieu's concepts of 'doxa' and 'symbolic capital' to appraise how social actors reinforce structural barriers to inclusion in DIY alternatives through the conscious and

unconscious replication and reproduction of normative (or doxic) logics and practice. This contention points to a need for more caution in championing the liberatory capacity of 3SF. It further challenges the idea that structural elements of exclusion, patriarchy and binary division are not found within 'alternative', counter cultural or autonomous spaces (sporting or otherwise). Also, it shows that sporting inclusion cannot be brought about through rhetorical means but needs considered and reflexive approaches to the introduction of competition and hierarchy.

Chapter 5 further outlined the benefits of analysing 3SF within the 'fully lived' spaces of the alternative soccerscape. This approach, highlighted 3SF spaces as polycentric and what Lefebvre would describe as both a site of domination and 'practical action'. Moreover, this *Lefebvrian* lens showed how the collectively developed 'desportized' reforms (introduced to the London 3SF community during my time in the field) point to a reflexive agency of social actors in the everyday. This showed the collective capacity of players to resist exclusory practices produced in material space. That excessive football players from Modena to Deptford have strategized and resisted against such doxic interventions, shows how social actors across the alternative soccerscape have been able to engender more inclusive and sustainable alternative spaces for sporting play, *crucially*, from below and through the body.

'Play and Politics'

My second analysis chapter critically considered the complex meanings given (and the sites of 'practical consciousness' found) within experiential contexts of the game. As such, it focused on the select sample of players interviewed who defined 3SF as a spatial intervention and a creative form of political protest. This was a further response to my research questions pertaining to the multiple ways in which the playing body in 3SF can be understood as a site of political contestation and social transformation. Also, it highlighted the broader ways in which participation within 3SF could articulate a wider sense of dislocation and anomie in 'neo-liberal' times for players.

Chapter 6 highlighted how experiential forms of 3SF remain a creative activist device through which social actors have been able to ‘find the revolution again’. This meant a number of different things to players, but each response broadly aligned in extolling the importance of 3SF (and its associated Situationist inspired activities) as a material political practice which reached beyond staid debates on Marxist political theory and enlivened the prospect of social transformation. The heightened states engendered by such moments in 3SF play showed how the game acts as a form of collective experimentation and political renewal. As such, 3SF in these contexts offered a liminal opportunity to enact accessible, expressive and creative forms of ‘left-wing’ politics. This time through forms of unbound experiential urban play.

Although participant’s responses in Chapter 6 were not explicitly bound to the writings of Jorn per-se, they can be linked to Situationism as a ‘lived’ contemporary practice where social actors felt able to challenge the political status quo through play. This points us towards the ways in which the work of the SI and the associated tactics of psychogeography and *detournement* in 3SF continue to have meaning in contemporary culture; specifically in outlier autonomous activist groups seeking playful solutions to the alienation of everyday life under capitalism.

Further to this contention, player reflections about haiku 3SF interventions can be profitably framed in similar terms to the Midnight Cricketers as acts of ‘territorial knowing’. These 3SF games led participants to reflect on, question and actively intervene in the highly controlled, demarcated zones of private and public space in London. Also, within highly restricted institutional art contexts across Europe. Thus, I argue further that 3SF has helped social actors engender new forms of political solidarity and gain a ‘right to the city’. Therefore, through such transient and creative interventionist acts, the playing body and the bouncing ball become political tools (both subject and object) in 3SF through which to subvert the world (albeit in playful ways).

Having established how 3SF remains a powerful device through which players contest the current political status quo, my findings also complicate the popular narratives associated with the neo-situationist revival (as a literary and artistic movement) implicitly tied to a retrospective exhibition at the ICA in 1989. Instead, the reflections I gathered from 3SF players involved in the early anarchic games (coupled with the archives of the associated literature at the May Day Rooms) shows that the emergence of 3SF has a direct lineage to the (non-institutional) use of Situationist tactics in the activist praxis of King Mob and the Angry Brigade in the 1970s, through to the ArtStrike, Monty Cantsin and Mail Art phenomenon of the 1980s (see Blazwick, 1989; Flores, 2020). This practical autonomous history is largely undocumented within the majority of literature about the 'revival' of the SI in the 1990s.

In this regard a number of scholars identify the revival of psychogeography (and its related theorists) in the 'spatial turn' of the 1990s and 2000s cultural milieu as indicative of an inward, at times indulgent, and ironical transitory appropriation; what Bookchin might term 'Lifestyle Anarchism'. As Rasmussen and Jakobson acerbically noted in reference to this post-modern phenomenon:

The Jornian idea of 'an experimental attitude' has been perversely realised in the 'creativity' hype...a kind of pseudo-psychogeography (where) the capital negating dimension was closed down by the forces of history and reaction...transforming the anti-authoritarian project into an individualised and hedonistic self-realization.
(2008: 217)

However, despite this description well applying to aspects of 3SF (and the creative playing community), the adoption of such absolutist notions of 'pseudo-psychogeography' or 'Mutant Situationism' need avoiding. My findings show the need to complicate our understandings of contemporary psychogeography and their associated creative political

interventions on the terms of those involved. In this regard, I argue that 3SF is a distinct form of sporting psychogeography and one which offers an embodied, liminal and accessible form of practical consciousness even if they do not lead to tangible change in society.

Key sociological questions remain for further studies into the wider revival of Situationism and what forms of liminal agency and liberation this allowed for activists. In this sense, my research contributes in a small way to our ethnographic understandings of the enduring importance of 'Radical Nostalgia' as a cultural practice (and coping strategy) which was developed by social actors in the face of political losses of the Left in the early 1990s and has continued to be employed through the 2010s and beyond in 3SF.

Through an identification of the complex meanings invested within such playful interventions in 3SF, my research opens up further questions as to what other parodic political sporting games have been aimed at the symbolic centres of power in contemporary culture. Also, whether such parodic interventions show the dearth of ways in which these centres can be disrupted or transformed by standard approaches to anti-capitalist protest? Further questions also remain as to the extent to which the occupation of city spaces and financial centres in the 1990s and early 2000s by creative activist groups was informed by the work of the SI. Also, how these movements and ideas relate to current tactics by climate activists (namely Extinction Rebellion). Moreover, research is needed in to how contemporary discourses around 'creativity', activism and non-violence may differ from those involved in the more aggressively oppositional and autonomous J18 protests in London. Also, the consequences of such different interpretations of play and its links to social change.

'An Underground of Laughter'

Chapter 6 also showed the importance of humour, parody and absurdism as a political tool within 3SF. Although trying to analyse such qualities is by design problematic, an exploration of absurd humour in 3SF enabled my analysis to move beyond the existing studies into the ‘anarcho politics of leisure’ in London. Here I understood that the liminal power of absurdist games of 3SF was also found in a defiant refusal to speak to power (and researchers) in coherent, logical or rationalised ways. In this sense, I further contend (and thus align with Collier) that a fundamental part of the political program developed by the SI (and Jorn in particular) was pata-physical and is a form of radical politics based on parody, absurdism, myth and anti-logic.²⁸

The responses I gathered in specific relation to the use of humour in wider forms of 3SF showed how the game offered a liminal space for players to laugh at politics and the seriousness in which competitive sport is normally played. As such, my findings further suggest that we should take laughter more seriously in alternative sporting contexts too. In this sense, I argue that ‘the underground of laughter’ within 3SF is a ‘social-bodily process’ through which participants felt able to test out and realise new forms of political and sporting engagement. As such, parodic sporting stances engendered further sites of practical or reflexive consciousness for players within the liminal spaces of 3SF. This is an important embodied perspective about the importance of humour and laughter in sport missing from existing studies into the alternative soccerscape. Specifically, in relation to how such laughter may be transformational and liberatory within ‘desportized’ football contexts.

Sterchele and Kuhn both mention the ‘sheer pleasure’ of alternative football within their work, however, my research points to a need for a wider analysis of how the non-instrumental pleasure, joy, laughter and humour employed in such amateur sporting contexts can be both radical, subversive, political and inclusive. There is a particular need to further study other London based alternative football initiatives in this regard. These could

²⁸ Although space did not allow for a further explication of Jorn’s absurdist three legged equestrian political activities in German occupied Denmark in the 1940s, my research has at least critically considered the importance of humour and parody as a political tool within SI (even if its efficacy remains dubious and unquantifiable).

include studies of the parodic club Streatham Rovers, and the inclusive informal initiatives run by 'Football Union' and 'London Left-footers' (see Lawley 2018, 2019).

'Afterlives'

My final analysis chapter looked at the 'afterlife' of 3SF. As such it provided a contribution to the field as a case study into how abstracted political ideas (or in Jorinian terms 'open creations') become subject to wider socio-cultural conditions and social-bodily processes over time and in the fully lived space. In other words, this chapter showed how 3SF has been appropriated as a popular practice.

Focussing on the semiotic 'loosening' of 3SF from its emergent context and its paidic political origins, my findings show the productive capacity of excessive players who have 'strategically appropriated' the game within the alternative soccerscape. Also, within ludic pedagogical settings. My data suggests in this regard that the vast majority of the playing community now find value and meaning through 3SF when defined and formalised as a three-sided (or triolectic) sport. This is a practice only nominally linked to Jorin and the texts of the London Psychogeographical Association. Therefore, I argue that 3SF has recently become a form of 'popular triolectics', and a cultural practice through which social actors are negotiating how to build, or re imagine, DIY societal alternatives in the alternative soccerscape.

In providing the chance for 3SF players to articulate what the game meant as a form of 'popular triolectics' on their own terms, my findings suggest that alternative sporting practices (more generally) are liminal embodied sites through which social actors feel able to negotiate (and invest in potential solutions to) wider concerns in their lives. Also, due to the liminal cultural positioning of sport as apolitical in popular discourse, participants were freed from the constraints of everyday life to realise new and uncertain transformational

projects. In this sense, my work into 3SF critically asked what forms of community were produced, built and sustained in DIY football spaces.

As demonstrated in Chapter 7, 3SF was framed by the majority of participants within discourses typical of 'against modern football' movements, or placed within grass roots alternative football contexts. As such, my findings are indicative of what motivates excessive players to play 3SF as based on perceptions of the hyper commodification of the elite game and of football as a crucial node of civic identity and a community asset in popular discourse. This finding aligns with Kennedy and Kennedy's identification of football's ontologically uncertain cultural position in 'neo liberal times'. Also, it shows the productive capacity of this reflexive position in engendering fan and player activism.

More specifically, my findings show that many of the players who have joined the game since 2012 frame 3SF (and its potential capacity to engender social change) as broadly within Kennedy and Kennedy's transformational DIY schema of 'self-management', 'anti-commercialism' and 'community organising'. In particular, this anti-commercialist tendency was commonly bound within 3SF to expressions of anti-UEFA and FIFA sentiments. Equally, notions of DIY 'community organising' and 'self-management' appear to be bound to a wider social need for representative polities within (non-league) football and beyond. In this sense, common narratives associated with 3SF and wider DIY football (both reformist and transformist) show how popular resistance to modern football expresses concerns about the alienation of social actors from football and its associated commercial spaces in neo liberal Britain. Moreover, how these narratives of urban alienation relate wider concerns about atomisation of communities and the commodification of everyday life. Further work is needed to draw out how these reflexive narratives in football activism can translate to transformative change.

With regard to how my ethnography contributes to wider sociological studies into the communitarianism in alternative amateur football contexts in London more broadly, this

chapter also offers a case study into the links and narratives that are being made by social actors between disparate transformational projects in the alternative soccerscape. That Clapton CfC and Dulwich Hamlets have not yet been subject to ethnographies (and to in depth analysis of their recent popularity) limits the contextual or comparative framing of my findings about 3SF. There is therefore a vital need for further studies into the alternative football networks of solidarity which are being made in the city. If, as I argue, 3SF requires variegated and 'accented' analysis within specific cultural contexts, then the same is also true of DIY football initiatives.

'Utopia and Nostalgia'

Given the ways in which social actors described how 3SF could radically change society for the better, I argue that the game offers a form of DIY utopianism which is latent across projects of the alternative soccerscape. As such, 3SF provides liminal spaces for players and fans alike to build alternative worlds in search of more equitable social and sporting relations. In existing studies, the utopianism bound to DIY football contexts is not explicitly outlined or identified. In this sense, Kennedy and Kennedy may argue for the social transformationalism of an autonomous network of clubs as the most visible vestige of a 'latent communitarian DIY impulse' but not how this is articulated or framed by those directly involved. My research into 3SF therefore contributes towards sociological understandings of the alternative soccerscape as a practical site to imagine and realise a space, sport and community of the possible.

Within the DIY utopian impulse of 3SF I identified a 'nostalgia' by players for a pure form of football which has been lost in contemporary culture. In this sense, I believe that transformationalist tendencies found in 3SF are also representative of an ambivalent form of 'Retrotopia' found in football activism. This, on the one hand, is a mythologizing of the past for reflexive transformative ends, but, it is also one which problematically idealises

pastoral notions of folk football, and further, one which romanticizes the harsh (commercial) realities of modern football as a nascent industrial working class phenomenon.

The links made between the nostalgic identification with the early modern game (and how this affects the discourses about contemporary football and social change) needs further analysis. Key questions remain as to how perceptions of late Victorian football feed in to popular nostalgic mythic discourses surrounding the 'nation', 'industrial heritage' and the apparent 'authenticity' of local communities in by gone ages of sport. Also, how reflexive forms of nostalgia may be mobilised directly in football for both progressive and reactionary ends. A key comparative case study in this regard could be into the nostalgic discourses and symbols utilised within the Democratic Football Lads Alliance, a nascent right wing social movement in football.

Whilst the nostalgia for a more authentic football in 3SF may tell us about the popular discourses which mobilise movements against 'modern football', the use of nostalgia within 3SF may have a wider implication for studies into nostalgia and its links to neo-liberalism. In this regard, nostalgia may be a uniting factor in drawing analysis of the disparate strands (and interpretations) of 3SF together in future studies. Although space has prevented me from exploring this suggestion further in my research, future empirical research about the evolving relationship of reflexive forms of nostalgia and their relations to the effects of neo liberalism through creative activism or alternative sport is needed. Expressly, to understand how nostalgia for the past can mobilise social actors towards forms of practical and impractical action.

The links between utopia and football need expanding upon in general and there is much work to be done in future studies about the alternative soccerscape in this regard. Key questions remain as to how alternative forms of football can act as a way to project a new world on to the present. Also, how grass roots DIY initiatives offer tangible and intelligible cultural forms to realise these alternative worlds. Given the normalisation that is occurring

within such DIY transformational spaces, this may not be fully articulated by social actors or recognised by embedded player researchers such as myself.

‘Pedagogy and Potential’

My analysis into the recent appropriation of 3SF within pedagogical settings further demonstrated how alternative sports are developed, sustained and reproduced in a wider cultural context. The reflections of the coaches and educational practitioners who have thus far utilised the sport in coaching sessions and classrooms (7 within my cohort), suggest that 3SF offers a useful device to challenge student passivity, nurture communication, and to develop emotional intelligence for young players. However, drawn from such a small sample these conclusions remain speculative, and are based on the top down reflections of those directly involved in their institution. A crucial addition for further studies about 3SF in this regard would be to include more comprehensive analysis of how pupils/participants have experienced these pedagogical games of 3SF (or F3C and Tritball). Also, how these players perceived the games in relation to the intended aims or projected outcomes of the sessions on their own terms.

Broadening out my contextual analysis of 3SF in its most prominent pedagogical setting to date, Chapter 7 lastly analysed 3SF in relation to the emergence of F3C in Colombia. This contextualised 3SF within a wider trend of top down football-for-development initiatives which have sought to engender social cohesion and community reconciliation through augmented forms of football. Although primarily based on findings derived from secondary readings and the singular perspective of the founder of F3C, this analysis further complicated our understandings of the potential accented ‘afterlife’ of 3SF as it loosens from its emergent context. It also pointed to profitable further studies into the game as it emerges in unlikely and disparate cultural contexts. Further key questions remain for such studies into F3C as to the extent to which new participants define and narrativise the game

in comparably transformative ways as those in Europe. Also, whether 3SF in this context has the ability to translate the playful spirit of Jorn into coherent and lasting change in Bogota.

Coda

Culture is left when all that is understood has been forgotten

(Jorn, 1994: 12)



Figure 50. 3SF 'Foot dart' (Courtesy of Channal Inflatables)

Channal Inflatables Product Description:

Inflatable three sided football field with foot dart is an excellent combination game. It allows 3 soccer teams to play 3sf inside the pitch, and others to play football dart shooting outside. 3 side (sic) soccer is played in a hexagonal court with 3 goals. The winning rule is determined by the team whose goal gets least scored. In this enclosed inflatable, one side is a giant foot dart board, and kids are able to cross the netting periphery and get inside the field easily. 3 sided soccer game is a rising star, especially in Europe. It is after all a fun group game to bring into any party, corporate and carnival activity. Our high quality product will make sure everyone has a great time.

(Channal, 2020)

This research project began in earnest when I inadvertently won the 2nd 3SF World cup in 2017. However, indicative of the games unlikely trajectories, it is ending in the late Summer of 2020 with repeated emails from a Guangzhou-based commercial inflatables company as to the ongoing availability of a blow up hexagonal football field (with the vital addition of a giant foot dart board). In this regard, predicting whether the games long term future exists as an absurd aerated addition to children's birthday parties and corporate events, or, if 3SF in fact becomes a vital tool in bringing together fragmented communities in Colombia, remains beyond this author. Instead, my thesis documented the contested social field of 3SF. Here, excessive players have entered into a number of profound existential conversations as to what constitutes a legitimate form of performance art, political activism or sporting practice. Moreover, my research served to document the enduring legacy of Situationism within 3SF. Also, how the game has been 'strategically appropriated' by a number of footballers in search of a three teamed, anti-capitalist grass-roots alternative.

My findings show 3SF as a unique ludic sounding board on to which participants feel able to project, rationalise and express their concerns about the fractious contemporary political climate and to re-imagine social relations. Equally, it is also a game which offers an

irreverent paidic site through which players find revolution, intervene in public space and laugh at the absurd 'seriousness' of bourgeois culture.

As 3SF has been popularised and subjected to global flows of media, images, and capital over the last decade, the game has also been (predictably) recuperated and commodified as a seemingly benign 'spectacular' concept. In these commercialised contexts it has been put to use by (amongst others) Mercedes Benz in Russia, Coke Zero in Hungary, Nestle in Malaysia and Wonderville Events in New York. However, it has also been beyond the scope (and will) of this researcher to discuss the commercial potential of the game with various advertising executives or brand consultants. Rather, I have viewed 3SF through the lens of those seeking other kinds of productive capacity from the game. However liminal, nostalgic, or idealistic, these disparate expressions for social transformation are, 3SF has been collectively realised (across the interpretive spectrum) within the 'fully lived' space. As such, it has become an ambivalent form of 'popular triolectics' through which various players interpret and transform the world in a myriad of ways. In conclusion, 3SF remains a sporting space which 'demands the impossible' of its players, (and in keeping with the spirit of the games founder), it is an absurd form of play where social actors are compelled to pass the ball to the opposition in spite of the unknown consequences of such actions.



Figure 51. Jorn on Tour 2017 (Courtesy of SOFC)

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Appendix:

Participant Details

| Name/ Pseudonym | Age | Interview Location | Interview Date | First 3SF Game | Affiliated Team/ 3SF Organisation |
|--------------------|-----|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---|
| Alex B | 37 | New Cross, London. | 14/11/2018 | 2016 | Strategic Optimism 3SFC |
| Alex | 18 | Kent House, London. | 30/11/2018 | 2012 | Polish Husaria |
| Asim | 42 | Parkers Piece, Cambridge. | 16/11/2018 | 1999 | Psychic Workers Union 3SFC |
| Ainslie | 32 | Pilrig Park, Edinburgh. | 4/11/2019 | 2015 | Edinburgh Disunited 3SF |

| | | | | | |
|---------|----|------------------------------|------------|------|---------------------------------------|
| Ben B | 33 | Elephant and Castle, London. | 10/11/2019 | 2013 | New Cross Irregulars 3SFC |
| Chris C | 37 | Blackheath, London. | 01/11/2018 | 2012 | Strategic Optimism 3SFC |
| Chris J | 28 | Whitechapel, London. | 14/11/2018 | 2015 | Partizan 3SFC |
| Chris V | 42 | Kassel, Germany. | 13/11/2018 | 2012 | Dynamo Windrad FSC |
| Fabian | 63 | Mudchute, London. | 28/11/2018 | 1993 | London Invisible 3SF League |
| Fabio | 56 | Bogota, Colombia. | 23/03/2019 | 2012 | Futbol 3 Colombia |
| Florina | 35 | Brockley, London. | 27/11/2018 | 2014 | London Invisible 3SF League |
| Francis | 32 | Peckham, London | 12/11/2018 | 2018 | Fordham Park 3SF League |
| Geoff | 59 | Bala, Wales | 8/11/2018 | 2010 | Philosophy Football 3SFC |
| Greg | 42 | Kent House, London. | 30/11/2018 | 2012 | Polish Husaria |
| Hass | 26 | Deptford, London. | 25/11/2018 | 2017 | Philosophy Football 3SFC |
| Jana | 28 | Bedstuy, New York | 13/12/2018 | 2012 | Atantis 3SFC |
| Jane | 33 | Elmore County, Alabama. | 11/11/2018 | 2016 | Tritball |
| Jason | 48 | Dulwich, London. | 22/12/2018 | 1996 | AAA |
| Jilly | 58 | Ladywell, London. | 25/11/2018 | 2014 | Official Fordham Park 3SF Time Keeper |

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|-------------------------------|-------------|------|------------------------------|
| | | | | | |
| John | 29 | South Bank, London. | 15/11/2018 | 2013 | Partizan 3SFC |
| Jon | 34 | Elmore County, Alabama. | 11/11/2018 | 2015 | Tritball |
| Juliet | 34 | Aldwych, London. | 28/11/2018 | 2014 | Strategic Optimism 3SFC |
| Khairil | 38 | Teddington, London. | 08/11/2018 | 2012 | New Cross Irregulars 3SFC |
| Lawrence | 28 | Woolwich, London. | 07/11/2018 | 2014 | New Cross Irregulars 3SFC |
| Lutz | 48 | Kassel, Germany. | 22/11/2018 | 2013 | Dynamo Windrad |
| Lukasz | N/A | Vicarage Road, Watford. | 13/11/2018 | N/A | Calcio D'angolo 3SFC |
| Mark D | 52 | Telegraph Hill, London. | 09/11/2018 | 1993 | Deptford 3SFC |
| Mark J | 34 | Melbourne, Australia. | 20/11/20018 | 2012 | Strategic Optimism 3SFC |
| Mark M | 29 | Craven Cottage, London. | 21/11/2018 | 2015 | Inter Melon 3SFC |
| Matthew | 31 | Kings Cross, London. | 21/11/2018 | 2014 | Strategic Optimists 3SFC |
| Miguel | 32 | London Fields, London. | 06/11/2018 | 2017 | Inter Melon 3SFC |
| Omer | 29 | Barbican, London. | 02/12/2018 | 2015 | Philosophy Football 3SFC |
| Owen | 32 | South Bank, London. | 15/11/2018 | 2012 | New Cross Irregulars 3SFC |
| Pete | 22 | Bethnal Green, London. | 22/11/2018 | 2017 | Oval 3SFC |
| Phillippe | 31 | Lyon, France. | 06/11/2018 | 2009 | Pied La Biche |

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|--------------------------|------------|------|--|
| Richard | N/A | Braintree, Essex. | 01/12/2018 | 1996 | LPA Match 3SF Official |
| Rob | 55 | Holborn, London. | 06/11/2018 | 2010 | Philosophy Football 3SFC |
| Robin | 23 | Leith, Edinburgh. | 04/05/2019 | 2016 | Edinburgh Situationist Disunited 3SF |
| Sally | 36 | Haggerston, London. | 22/11/2018 | 2007 | Whitechapel Gallery 3SFC |
| Sami | 31 | Islington, London. | 12/11/2018 | 2015 | Athletico Aesthetico 3SFC |
| Simon | 26 | Leith, Edinburgh | 04/05/2019 | 2013 | Edinburgh Situationist Disunited 3SF |
| Tah Etheh | N/A | Alytus, Lithuania. | 06/06/2019 | 2011 | ABRACADABRA- T |
| Timothea | 25 | Leith, Edinburgh. | 04/05/2019 | 2013 | Edinburgh Situationist Disunited 3SF |
| Will S | 44 | Crofton Park, London. | 20/11/2019 | 2007 | New Cross Irregulars |